

CALAMITOUS METHODS OF COMPULSION: LABOR, WAR, AND REVOLUTION IN A
HABSBURG INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT, 1906-1919

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ABSTRACT

John Robertson: Calamitous Methods of Compulsion: Labor, War, and Revolution in a Habsburg Industrial District, 1906-1919
(Under the direction of Chad Bryant)

This investigation re-centers violence in the domestic experience of the First World War in order to explain the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, arguing that the First World War revolutionized the experience of Habsburg governance in the Ostrava-Karviná industrial district. Before the outbreak of war, the state acted as judge and arbiter; afterwards it acted as tyrant, according to plans laid out before the war. The tyrannical character of war-time Habsburg governance as it sought to mobilize and coerce industrial labor hollowed out the state, as deprivation and violence drove desperation and resistance. Ultimately by the summer of 1918 the Habsburg state had become disposable, shattering Habsburg authority long before the formal end of Habsburg rule in the Bohemian lands. The end of the war and the dissolution of the Habsburg state opened up a moment of broad political and social possibilities, in which the ethno-nationalist and class politics suppressed by the war re-emerged as competing power centers. Though there were many claimants for legitimacy and loyalty in Ostrava-Karviná, the iron fist of the Czech Legion led to the establishment of a new multi-ethnic empire in Ostrava-Karviná - Czecho-Slovakia.

To James Kyle Doyle, without whom none of this would have been possible.

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A NOTE ON USAGE

The specificity of language as a central site of political contestation in the Habsburg Monarchy in general and in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia in particular has rendered denotation a minefield. I have attempted as much as possible to avoid anachronistic and/or nationalist usages, and to avoid implicitly or explicitly accepting the nationalistic postulate that the choice of a particular descriptor also entails taking a political position on the "true" or "authentic" character of the described. For this reason I have avoided using national descriptors to describe nationalist actors or activities, thus using for example "Czech-national" or "ethnic Czech" instead of simply "Czech" for self-consciously Czech-speaking Habsburg citizens.

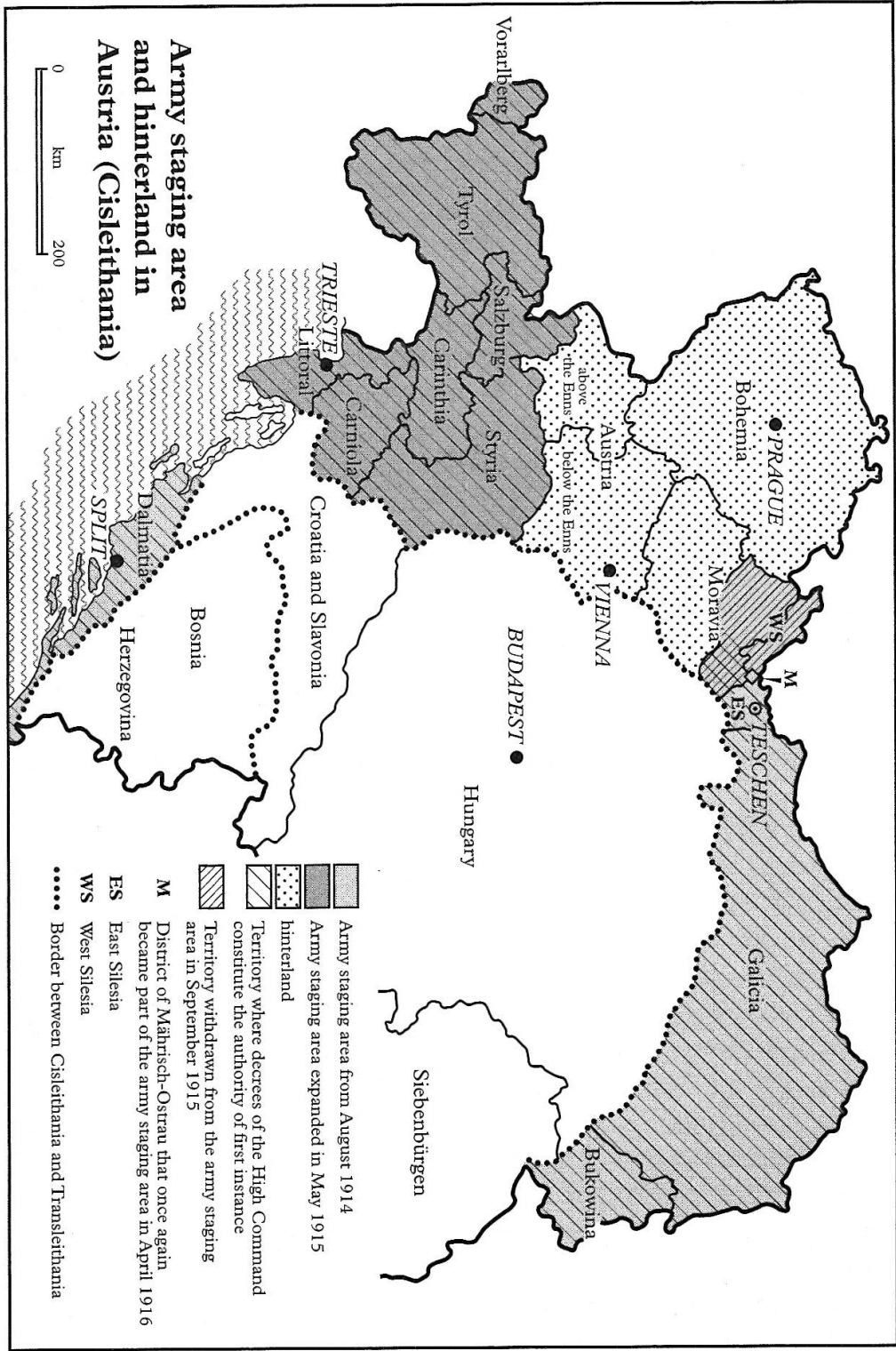
For places with English names, I have used those names. The majority of place names used here, though, have no accepted English equivalent. I have generally chosen to use the Czech name followed by the German name for these, while occasionally also listing an additional name if relevant. This usage is aimed purely at rendering the areas discussed as legible as possible for the reader, who will thus be able to locate these areas on contemporary maps of the Czech Republic while also recognizing the areas discussed in both Czech- and German-language sources.

For personal names, many figures discussed used multiple equivalent names (Bendřich vs. Friedrich, for example) depending on the language in which they happened to be using at the time, and for these I have largely defaulted to the usage given in the documents. In some instances I have used the more widely known German names, again in hopes of remaining as legible as possible for the reader.

Finally, following contemporary usage regarding the name of the state I use Czecho-Slovakia and Czecho-Slovak rather than Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovak preceding the

passage of the February 1920 Constitution. Following the adoption of this Constitution the correct legal spelling was changed to Czechoslovakia, at which point such became preferred usage. All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

Figure 1. Areas under Military Administration in the Habsburg Monarchy. Source: Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 6.



Introduction

*Ostravo Ostravo
Město mezi městy hořké
Moje štěstí
Ostravo Ostravo
Černá hvězdo nad hlavou*

*Pámbů rozdal
Jiným městům všecku krásu
Parníky na řekách
A dámy všité do atlasu
Ostravo Ostravo
Srdce rudé
Zpečetěný osude*

*Ostravo Ostravo
Kde jsem oči nechal
Když jsem k tobě spěchal
Ostravo Ostravo
Černá hvězdo nad hlavou*

*Ať mě moje nohy
Nesly kam mě nesly
Ptáci na obloze
Jenom jednu cestu kreslí
Ostravo Ostravo
Srdce rudé
Zpečetěný osude*

-Jaromír Nohavica, "Ostravo"

*Ostrava, Ostrava
City among bitter cities
My joy
Ostrava, Ostrava
Black star overhead*

*Father dispensed
To other cities all loveliness
Steamboats on rivers
And ladies quilt into the atlas
Ostrava, Ostrava
Crimson heart
Sealed destiny.*

*Ostrava, Ostrava
Where I left my vision behind,
When I hastened to you
Ostrava, Ostrava
Black star overhead*

*Let me my legs
Carry me to where they carry me
Birds in the heavens
Sketch only one journey
Ostrava, Ostrava
Crimson heart
Sealed destiny.*

The First World War brought about the end of Central and Eastern European empires. At the end of 1918 the Romanovs had been deposed and murdered, Wilhelm II of the German Empire was settling into exile in the Netherlands, British and French troops had occupied Istanbul while Entente diplomats partitioned the Ottoman Empire, and Karl I Habsburg-Lothringen, last of his house to rule, sat in Castle Eckartsau in Lower Austria in internal exile. The collapse of empires and the signing of treaties did not, however, end the turmoil created by the First World War. Central and Eastern Europe would not emerge from the “continuum of crisis” inaugurated in 1914 until the 1920s.¹

The collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy was to contemporary observers in 1918 perhaps unsurprising, as before the outbreak of the First World War the late Habsburg Monarchy was considered and considered itself to be the weakest great power in the Pentarchy, the five great powers who led Europe. The vibrancy of the other powers economically, their acquisition of immense colonial domains, and their expanding and modernizing militaries fueled contemporary worries that the Habsburg Monarchy was suffering from a malaise, and that its potential as a world or even a continental power was rapidly declining. Graf Paar, Kaiser Franz Josef's adjutant, wrote that foreign visits were greeted with comments that "these foreign guests were coming in order to see Austria one more time before it collapsed."² Nevertheless, the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy was not inevitable, though many historians have suggested as much.

The most extreme scholarly example of the declinists is A.J.P. Taylor's *The Habsburg*

¹For this concept I am indebted to Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002) 2. For a similar approach to periodization see Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia and the Middle East, 1914-1923* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

²See Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers* (Graz, Vienna, Cologne: Verlag Styria, 1993) 15.

Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary, in which he argues that the Habsburg Monarchy had in fact been dead since the Austro-Prussian War and characterizes the entirety of modern Habsburg history as a more or less pointless *Totentanz*.³ Without going so far as that, many other historians viewed the Monarchy as a "sick man" of Europe ever since the inauguration of Dualism in 1867, if not before. With collapse as the end point, these accounts offer teleological accounts of structural decline, emphasizing nationalism and pluralism as undermining the Monarchy's cohesion and internal strength.⁴

Nevertheless, considerable recent scholarship points to a much more durable and effective Habsburg state than had previously been appreciated.⁵ The Monarchy was not a hollow facade before 1914; it was a stable and increasingly prosperous state, though not a militarily powerful or assertive one. Why, then, did it disintegrate in 1918? For Alan Sked, "to speak of *decline and fall* with regard to the Monarchy is simply misleading: it fell because it lost a major war."⁶ However, this response and the many like it substantially elide both *why* and *how* the pressures of war spelled the end of the five-century-old Monarchy, as well as *why* and *how* the

³A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

⁴This perspective of the default assumption of generations of historians writing following the collapse of the Monarchy. See for example Oszkár Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929); Robert A. Kann, *The Multinational Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848-1918*. 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950); Z.A.B. Zeman, *The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918: A Study in National and Social Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Arthur May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918*. 2 vols. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966); C.A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire, 1790-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968).

⁵See for example Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918* (London: Dorset Press, 1991); David Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Robin Okey, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1765-1918: From Enlightenment to Eclipse* (London: Macmillan Press, 2001); Gunther Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1976); F.R. Bridge, *The Habsburg Monarchy Among the Great Powers, 1815-1918* (Providence: Berg, 1990); Samuel Williamson Jr., *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1991).

⁶Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire*. 264.

experience of the war shaped the nature of post-war East-Central Europe.⁷

This investigation contends that the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy was a consequence of the experience of the First World War. More specifically, it asserts that this collapse resulted in large part from the pressures and stresses brought about by the mobilization of resources human, economic, financial, and industrial to prosecute the First World War. The main questions guiding this investigation are first, how did the Habsburg state engage with its citizenry before and during the First World War? What methods did these administrators and military men use to mobilize, persuade, and control Habsburg citizens? How did these citizens experience and respond to mobilization, persuasion, and control during the war? And finally, in what ways did these evolving war-time relationships influence the end of the war and its immediate aftermath?

In order to answer these questions I have undertaken a regional study, concentrating on the labor force in one of the most important industrial regions in the Habsburg Monarchy, the Ostrava-Karviná industrial district, also known as Ostravsko.⁸ Whether understood as a strength or as a weakness, Austria-Hungary was defined by diversity; no single area in the Monarchy was the same as any other. As its existence was plural, so was its downfall; the Habsburg Monarchy fell in different ways and in different times in different places. This small regional study allows a focused examination of a particular area's experience of peace, war, and collapse with substantial depth over an extended time frame. Organizations, actors, events, and their interactions are traced over time to provide a deeper and subtler perspective on the lived experience of Habsburg governance, tyranny, and collapse. Historians of the First World War have recently moved

⁷See below for a more exhaustive treatment of the historiography of the Habsburg collapse.

⁸Ostravsko is a term borrowed from Czech, denoting the Ostrava metropolitan area. Though mildly anachronistic - Ostrava was created in 1924 out of a number of smaller municipalities, centered around the twin cities of Moravian and Polish Ostrava/Ostrau - it usefully denotes the entire area under discussion.

towards embedding analysis of the domestic experience of war into specific concrete communities for this very reason.⁹

I here argue that the way in which the citizens of Cisleithania experienced Habsburg authority underwent enormous changes between 1906 and 1918 in ways which fueled a growing crisis of governability, bringing down the Habsburg Monarchy in Ostravsko by the summer of 1918. State violence was at the core of these changes.

Mass political mobilization in pre-war Austria-Hungary was enabled by the Habsburg state as an arbiter and arena of mass politics, rather than a contestant, a role that would be fundamentally altered in the last pre-war years. The Habsburg government was judge and arbiter during peacetime. A state of war, though, was a state of exception, and the debate over and contents of the 1912 War Production Law revealed that the Habsburg Monarchy fully intended to pursue an authoritarian response to the challenge of labor mobilization during wartime.¹⁰ The widespread ethnonationalist violence which wracked the district in the summer of 1914 raised fears of violent resistance to mobilization, warranting large-scale military intervention and actualizing the authoritarian response promised two years earlier. This military intervention, the mobilization which it aimed to ensure, and the militarization of industrial labor and pursuant repression of political life at the beginning of the First World War replaced the state as judge with the state as tyrant.

⁹These studies, while enormously fruitful and conceptually engaging, have almost exclusively concentrated on capital cities. See Jay Winter, Jean Louis Robert, eds., *Capital Cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin 1914-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). The notable exception to the focus on capital cities is Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

¹⁰For the state of exception, see: Carl Schmitt, "Diktatur und Belagerungszustand. Eine staatsrechtliche Studie," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Strafrechtswissenschaft* 38 (1916); Giorgio Agamben, Kevin Attell, trans., *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

The methods of the tyrannical state were to eventually fail, leading to the collapse of the state's coercive potential. As the war progressed, the experience of deprivation, military violence, and labor exploitation appeared and worsened. Episodes of spontaneous protest and resistance evoked a combination of heightened military repression and conciliation through ameliorative measures. However, as the war progressed, the state's ability to manage deprivation collapsed and the need for steel and especially coal from Ostravsko continued to mount. The state's ability to manage the inhabitants of Ostravsko plunged into a crisis against which the Habsburg Army resorted to a policy of terror which destroyed the Habsburg state by the summer of 1918. Whereas at the beginning of the war the Habsburg state became tyrannical, by its end it had become contemptible.

The progression of Habsburg governance from judicial to tyrannical to contemptible brought about its collapse substantially before the formal dissolution of the state in October, and represented the culmination of a growing crisis of governability. This crisis of governability, though, was driven neither by ethno-nationalism nor by organized labor. Instead, it emerged from the relationship between the government and the governed. Following the formal collapse of Habsburg political authority in late October of 1918, though, a series of ethno-nationalisms as well as Bolshevism emerged as alternate claimants for personal loyalty and political legitimacy.

A welter of revolutions and counter-revolutions aimed to establish a new post-Habsburg order, though only one succeeded - the Czecho-Slovak Republic. I argue that, contrary to the accepted narrative, the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic was intrinsically bound up with violence – violence against German separatists, against Polish soldiers and nationalists, and against the miners and steelworkers whose labor was needed to fuel an economic regeneration after the devastation of the war.

This is a local history, and as Jeremy King has pointed out, "local histories have their limits."¹¹ The generalizability of my argument is limited in some ways. A focus on Czech-, Polish-, and German-speaking industrial labor has little to tell us about the experiences of Croat-speaking farmers in Dalmatia, Magyar-speaking minor gentry in Transylvania, or Italian-speaking sailors in the Imperial and Royal Navy, though each of these also experienced and reacted to Habsburg rule and Habsburg collapse in their own ways. This investigation has does not aim to explicate Imperial policy as made in Vienna beyond the debate over the War Production Law examined in Chapter Two, nor have I sought to treat the Habsbug military in any great detail. The local character of this investigation precludes a focus on the Army beyond the military's personnel and domestic policing operations within Ostravsko.

The very local character of this regional study, though, is critical in moving beyond macropolitical accounts of change centered on decision-makers at the highest levels of state power. This account centers the views and actions of the approximately one hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants of Ostravsko, as historical subjects rather than historical objects of high politics. This approach uncovers the effects of Imperial policy and Army operations as they were implemented rather than conceptualized, demonstrates how state policy was received and understood by its objects, and explores how these people challenged and reacted to state and military attempts to manage and govern them.

This area, now in the north-eastern part of the Czech Republic, had its share of regional peculiarities, peculiarities which render it an enormously intriguing subject for a regional study. Ostravsko contained the richest anthracite coal deposits in the Monarchy. Within its borders a wide array of industrial complexes operated, including the Vítkovice Steelworks, the largest

¹¹Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) 11.

under Habsburg suzerainty. Steel production, weapons manufacturing, rail transport, and even civilian heating in Vienna all relied on anthracite from Ostrava-Karviná. Heavy industry and coal mining employed enormous numbers of people, fueling Socialism and labor unrest at the same time as it magnified the Habsburg state's interest in the region's stability and order. Further, as a borderland both geographically and ethnically, this district was the home of strong and competing nationalist political movements agitating on behalf of their conception of Czech, Polish, and German national interests.

During the First World War, the smooth operation of Ostravsko's industrial complexes and coal mines became even more important to the Habsburg state and the Habsburg Army. The miners and workers there possessed irreplaceable skills, keeping the majority of them out of the Army and, indeed, the Army returned many conscripted workers from the region to their workplaces as the war ground on. This prevented the whole-sale feminization of urban labor which occurred across the warring states of Europe. It also, though, led to the Habsburg Army, Gendarmes, and police exercising a level of coercion against the civilian population which had much more in common with occupied Belgrade than Vienna, Prague, or Budapest.

Coercive militarization of industrial labor was a process that extended beyond Ostrava-Karviná, and was present to a greater or lesser extent across Cisleithania. The specific character of military violence experienced in Ostrava-Karviná, though, was substantially shaped by the district's inclusion in the Zone of Army Operations. Arbitrary judicial violence and the persecution of ethno-nationalist activists and populations were enabled in this area as they were in other border regions subordinated to military rule by the absence of countervailing civil authority. However, the scope of these dynamics was not Monarchy-wide. Transleithania, for example, escaped military rule as well as the extremes of hunger and deprivation which wracked

urban areas in Cisleithania. Urban populations without important industrial skills such as in Vienna or Prague experienced deprivation even sharper than that seen in Ostrava-Karviná, but were spared the lash of military coercion.

Ostravsko was also an important site where competing visions of a post-Habsburg East-Central Europe clashed violently. Transition to a post-Habsburg order was anything but orderly. Like much of Central and East Central Europe, the former Habsburg provinces of Bohemia and Moravia experienced a welter of revolutions and counter-revolutions. The declaration of the Czecho-Slovak Republic on August 28, 1918 may have marked a transition in formal political authority from the Habsburg state to the nascent Republic, but in practice Prague's authority over the territory claimed by the new Czecho-Slovak state was challenged by ethnic German communities, the rump Hungarian and nascent Polish states, and the looming threat of Bolshevik revolution. These claims were suppressed by force of arms. Divisions of the Czech Legion invaded and occupied the Moravian and Silesian borderlands, occupying the seat of the Sudetenland government, Opava/Troppau, on December 18th, 1918. Czecho-Slovak military units fought a cold and occasionally a hot war against Polish forces until Czechoslovak possession of the area was granted by treaty in March of 1920. The Ostrava-Karviná district is thus an important site in which to conduct an in-depth regional study of Habsburg governance, resistance, and collapse.

Kde domov můj? Ostravsko in Demography and Geography

As coal was king for Habsburg soldiers and functionaries during the First World War, so was it central to the meaning and history of Ostravsko. In Austria-Hungary, as in other industrial states, coal deposits and their surrounding areas became crucial centers of industrial production and economic activity. Russian industry was, for example, heavily concentrated in the

Dombrowa and Donetz basins, French industry in the coal basins of northern France, British industry in the Midlands, and German industry in the Ruhr, the Saar, and upper Silesia.¹²

Accidents of nature and geography situated the vast majority of Austria-Hungary's coal in Bohemia and Moravia. Minor quantities were scattered throughout the remainder of the Austrian lands.¹³ Bohemia and Moravia accordingly became home to the most important industrial centers under Habsburg rule, especially in terms of heavy industry. The Škoda works in Plzeň as well as the Vítkovice Steelworks in Ostrava were noteworthy in this regard.¹⁴

Austria-Hungary's coal deposits were much smaller than those of the other great powers. Only about three quarters of Austria's coal demands were met through domestic production in 1913, with the vast majority of the deficit covered through German imports.¹⁵ The types of coal available exacerbated this weakness, as the majority of Austrian coal was the considerably less valuable soft or 'brown' coal (lignite) rather than the much preferred hard or 'stone' coal (anthracite). Although Austrian lignite deposits were of a considerably higher grade than was typical in Europe, Austrian lignite was still less than half as energetic as anthracite, even though it constituted almost two thirds of yearly Austrian coal output.¹⁶ Anthracite was critical to steel production, and the Austrian iron and steel industry devoured virtually the entire domestic

Austrian anthracite yield yearly.¹⁷

¹²R. W. Clarke, "The Influence of Fuel on International Politics." *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* 2, no. 3 (1923).

¹³Emil Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich Während des Krieges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925). II-III.

¹⁴The Škoda works in Plzeň were fed by the Plzeň-Mies anthracite basin, while Vítkovice was supplied from its shafts in the Ostrava-Karviná district.

¹⁵Wegs, *Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft*, 21; Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, XXII.

¹⁶Wegs, *Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft*, 16; Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, I. 27,461 tons of lignite in 1913 vs 16,336 tons of anthracite.

¹⁷Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, II; Richard Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs Während des Krieges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932). 275.

The Ostrava-Karviná basin was the most important anthracite field in Austria-Hungary. Divided between northeastern Moravia and Austrian Silesia, it was one of the richest in Europe.¹⁸ Centered around the municipality of Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau and including many other municipalities, the Ostrava-Karviná basin encompassed thirty-nine mines with a yearly yield of over nine million tons of high-grade anthracite, a number of coking works with a yearly output of over two million tons of coke, and the Vítkovice Steelworks, Austria-Hungary's most important steel producer.¹⁹ Other notable industrial concerns were the Austrian Steel and Mining Corporation (*Österreichische Berg- und Hüttengesellschaft*), which in addition to mining and coking operations operated industrial machining and metalworking plants, and the Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway (*Kaiser Ferdinand Nordbahn*). The Northern Railway, which linked Ostravsko directly to Vienna, operated numerous coal mines as well as a large rail workshop complex in Přívoz/Oderfurt.

Demographically, the Ostrava-Karviná basin was composed of roughly equal proportions of ethnic Czechs and ethnic Poles, the vast majority of whom had moved to Ostravsko to find work. The Polish-speaking population stemmed chiefly from Habsburg Galicia, and the Czech-speaking population was drawn from all over Moravia and eastern Bohemia.²⁰ Moreover, the distribution tended to be unequal; Polish-speaking workers and miners clustered in the Silesian areas of Ostravsko, while Czech-speaking workers and miners tended to settle in the Moravian part of the district. Workers and their families did not, as a rule, operate any sort of garden plot, though approximately a fifth of the steel workers at the nearby Vítkovice Steelworks were so-

¹⁸Norman J. G. Pounds, "The Spread of Mining in the Coal Basin of Upper Silesia and Northern Moravia," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 48, no. 2 (1958): 149. The Ostrava-Karviná district was located over the same coal field as the German industrial conurbation of Upper Silesia.

¹⁹Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, 1. Production numbers referenced are from 1913

²⁰Ferdinand Hanusch, Emmanuel Adler, eds. *Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 186.

called "iron peasants" who supplemented their factory labor with small-scale agricultural production.²¹ Workers and miners lived all across the district, in worker colonies next to mine shafts, in worker barracks and apartments built and operated by industrial concerns, and in the small or not so small municipalities that dotted the district.

What drew so many Habsburg citizens to Ostravsko were the economic opportunities available there. The runaway growth of the steel, coal, and coking industries brought with it demand for both skilled and unskilled labor as well as enormous amounts of money. The influx of population brought opportunities in the building trades, whereas the influx of money brought with it opportunities for members of the professions to establish themselves in the newly prosperous region. Secondary industries also began to appear - oil refineries, textile manufactories, and brickworks made appearances, among others. The coal mines employed almost forty thousand workers in 1913, with the coking plants employing an additional five thousand.²² The total population of the basin area was approximately one hundred and twenty thousand, including dependents, and as such over a third of the population was directly involved in coal production.²³ The Vítkovice Steelworks employed another eighteen thousand workers in its industrial operations at the beginning of 1914.²⁴

According to a local police councillor's report, those German-speakers who lived in the industrial district were mostly engaged in management and other white collar occupations. Their

²¹Peter Huemos, "'Kartoffeln her oder es gibt eine Revolution': Hungerkrawalle, Streiks und Massenproteste in den böhmischen Ländern 1914-1918," in *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Beziehungen zwischen Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutschen*, ed. Hans Mommsen, Dušan Kovič, and Jiří Malíř (Essen: Klartext, 2001).

²²More precisely, it was 38,493 miners and 4,490 coking workers. Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, XXX.

²³ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht." Jaroslav Petr, April 6th, 1916. 117,000 people in 1916.

²⁴18,163, to be precise. AVZ/VHHT/154/861/Jan. 3, 1914/Standestabelle mit 31. Dezember 1913.

allegiance was primarily to the Liberals or to German nationalist parties. The working classes were primarily Social Democratic in their political allegiances, although Czech- and Polish-speakers were split along nationalist lines as were the Social Democratic parties.²⁵ The Czech-speaking Social Democratic movement in the industrial district was divided between centralists advocating an internationalist vision of social democracy and autonomists emphasizing a Czech-nationalist approach.²⁶ Those Czech-speakers outside of the Social Democratic faction were further divided into Old Czech, Clerical, and Progressive (*pokrokáři*) factions, though these groups were largely negligible.²⁷

A tu sílu vzdoru zmar: Mobilization, the Military and the War

The First World War only increased the importance of the Ostrava-Karviná basin. The Austrian Minister of the Interior had urged stockpiling coal supplies as a precaution before the outbreak of the war, but nothing of significance had been done before August rendered the question moot.²⁸ The outbreak of the war and the imposition of a near-total allied blockade against the Central Powers cut off most external coal supplies, but coal imports from outside of the Central Powers bloc were virtually non-existent before the war, and the disappearance of the small quantities of imported British coal shipped through Trieste had little impact. German anthracite exports to Austria fell drastically, and alternative sources of foreign supply capable of compensating for the drop in German exports were not available.²⁹

²⁵Státní Ústřední Archiv v Praze, *Sborník dokumentů k vnitřnímu vývoji v českých zemích za I. světové války, 1914-1918. Svazek I. - Rok 1914* (Prague: Státní Ústřední Archiv v Praze, 1993). 137-138. Police Councillor's Report, November 3rd, 1914.

²⁶The autonomists tended to have more support in the area than the centralists, though it is difficult to track precisely. The autonomists published *Na zdar*, while the centralist newspaper for Ostravsko was the *Dělnický deník*.

²⁷For further explanation of these factions and parties, see H. Louis Rees, *The Czechs during World War I: The Path to Independence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). 1-21.

²⁸Robert Wegs, *Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft*. 81.

²⁹Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, XXII. German anthracite exports to Austria dropped

The importance of the anthracite supply for transport and industry, Hungary's demands for coal to fuel her industries and heat her cities in exchange for the flour needed to feed the Monarchy's armies, and the necessity of supplying urban areas with heat all combined to make any disturbance in Ostrava-Karviná's coal and steel output a pressing threat to the stability and security of the Monarchy as a whole.³⁰ Both the Ostrava-Karviná district's pre-eminence in anthracite production and its high-capacity rail connection with Vienna and Austria's main transportation networks made it the optimal region for supplying anthracite to cover all of these needs.³¹

The increasing importance of Ostrava-Karviná's anthracite can be found in the nature of total war. Following Roger Chickering, I understand total war to mean the “systematic erasure of distinctions between the military and civilian spheres...Civilians were as critical to the outcome...as were soldiers. Homefronts were essential to the material and moral support of armies, navies, and air forces.”³² Navigating the frequently conflicting and always complicated demands of maintaining both civilian morale and industrial productivity became equally as important as success in the field. The allied blockade, the overwhelming fact of the economic life

from 10,351,000 tons in 1913 to 7,896,000 tons in 1914 and 7,449,000 tons in 1915, a drop of almost 25%.

³⁰The Ministry of Public Works negotiated a deal with the Hungarian government to deliver anthracite and coke suitable for industrial uses in exchange for Hungarian foodstuffs for the army. In some instances, coal was also traded for food for the civilian population. See Horst Haselsteiner, “The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Mobilization of Food Supplies,” in *East Central European Society in World War I*, ed. Béla Király and Nándor Dreisziger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Hanusch, Adler, eds., *Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 216; ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(47). “Direktoren-Konferenz des Ostrau-Karwiner Steinkohlenrevieres.” February 24th, 1916; Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, 7.; Wegs, *Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft*, 82. As an example, Ostrava-Karviná supplied 33,800 tons of coal to Vienna during the winter of 1914-1915.

³¹Miroslav Havrlant and others, *Dějiny Ostravy: Vydáno k 700. Výročí založení města* (Nakladatelství Profil: Ostrava, 1967). 735; The Ministry for Transport and Traffic, “Traffic and Transport in Austria,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 1921, no. 98:40-41. The rail link with Vienna, established in 1847, was also instrumental in the growth of the Vítkovice works.

³²Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

of the Central Powers, forced the Monarchy to provide almost entirely for itself. It created a kind of involuntary autarky.³³

The institution ultimately responsible for guaranteeing Habsburg supplies of coal and steel was the Army. The Habsburg military was a small force, tasked with the maintenance of internal order. It was neither equipped or prepared for continental warfare against other great powers. Constant budgetary battles with the Hungarian leadership in Budapest left the army smaller and weaker than any of its counterparts. A.J.P. Taylor points out that "...in 1914, though ranking only after Russia and Germany in population, Austria-Hungary spent less on armaments than any Great Power...less even than Italian [expenditures]. The 'military monarchy' of the Habsburgs was, in fact, the least militarised state in Europe".³⁴ Paul M. Kennedy, representing the consensus view of the matter, attributes this military weakness to the problem that, "...its ostensibly impressive population of fifty-two million (1913) concealed enormous ethnic diversities, a cumbersome dual monarchy, and substantial regional differences – all of which made it politically impossible for the Habsburg Empire to mobilize manpower, and afford the military spending, which a smaller and much less populous France achieved".³⁵

It was an army commanded primarily by German-speakers. According to the official nationality statistics as recorded by the army itself, 76.1 percent of the officers in the *k. [aiserliche] u. [nd] k. [önigliche]* Army were primarily German-speaking, with 10.7 percent Magyar-speaking and the remainder fairly insignificant. 56.8 percent of reserve officers were German-speaking, with Magyar-speakers representing 24.5 percent. 68 percent of the bureaucrats

³³Food, raw materials, and industrial products were occasionally available for purchase from Italy, Switzerland, or Romania, but never in sufficient quantities and less and less was available as the war went on, especially following Italy and Romania's entries into the war on the side of the Entente.

³⁴A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy*. 229.

³⁵Paul Kennedy, "The First World War and the International Power System," *International Security* 9.1 (1984). 15.

in the Imperial and Royal War Ministry were German-speaking.³⁶ These figures are not definitive – István Deák argues that the methods used by the Austro-Hungarian Army to determine nationality were fundamentally flawed and recalculates the figure for officers as approximately 55 percent German-speaking, though he accepts the standard figures for reserve officers and doesn't address the War Ministry distribution.³⁷ In either case, German- and Magyar-speakers constituted an over-weighty proportion of military authority in the Joint Army. The official ethnicity of the professional officer corps was not terribly important, however, as Deák argues. Based on the multiplicity of languages and commands, their wide experience within the Monarchy, and a notable and powerful ideology of supranationalism, he claims convincingly that, "...an enormous number of Joint Army officers had, for all intents and purposes, no nationality".³⁸

They did, however, dispose of an ideology, one which played a significant role in determining military pressures on and reactions to civil society during the First World War. As Jonathan Gumz recently argued, "for the Habsburg Army, the war began at home."³⁹ Habsburg military culture, as represented in the upper echelons of the officer corps, had been crafted primarily from the experience of 1848. The ideological upheaval brought about by the nationalist revolts of that year left an enduring mark on the Army's relationship with civil society. As Johann

³⁶Manfried Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers*. 45. What exactly this means is a controversial issue in Habsburg history - the official statistics on which these figures are based were not concerned with nationality at all, and recorded merely the self-reported language of daily use with no option for putting down more than one. To what extent such reflected any kind of nationalist commitment is an open question, though recent research has cast doubt on the previously assumed connection between language of daily use and national feeling.

³⁷For the full argument and figures, see: István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). 178-189.

³⁸Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*. 183-184.

³⁹Jonathan Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). 11.

Allmayer-Beck argues, the Habsburg Army following 1848 retreated from the rest of Habsburg society in order to remain free from the ideological contamination of nationalism and mass politics.⁴⁰

Gunther Kronenbitter, in perhaps the best study of the Habsburg officer corps, portrays those men as being centrally concerned with several factors. These were: a reading of history emphasizing the Army's connection with the dynasty, a "lust for honor" which "had a secure place in the social practice of the officer corps," and opposition to "the voracity of the revolutionary masses as well as the egomania of the bourgeoisie."⁴¹ The various commitments of the Habsburg officer corps - duty to the dynasty, honor in unquestioning service, transcendence of partiality (*unparteilichkeit*) - came together in what Major-General Blasius Schemua, briefly Chief of the Habsburg General Staff, termed *Ritterlichkeit* (knightliness).⁴²

The Habsburg Army thus viewed itself as the true guarantor and representative of Habsburg values, a set of values which for the Army remained firmly rooted in the absolutism of the *Vormärz* era. The Army's hatred of democracy, politics, and nationalism meant that "it barely tolerated nations and democracy in times of peace, but in times of war that toleration ended. Once the First World War began, the Army aggressively moved to develop its bureaucratic-absolutist program as far as possible...Civil society was to be externally controlled and directed along the paths that the Army wanted it to go."⁴³ This attitude was to have important

⁴⁰Johann Allmayer-Beck, "Die bewaffnete Macht in Staat und Gesellschaft," in Adam Wandruszka and Peter Urbanitsch, eds. *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848-1918*, vol. 5: *Die bewaffnete Macht* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1987).

⁴¹Gunther Kronenbitter, *"Krieg im Frieden": Die Führung der k.u.k. Armee und die Großmachtpolitik Österreich-Ungarns, 1906-1914* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2003). 122, 125.

⁴²Kronenbitter, *"Krieg im Frieden."* 126. I use knightliness rather than chivalry to avoid the romantic connotations chivalry connotes in English.

⁴³Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914-1918*. 15.

ramifications for the experience of the First World War in the militarized steel and coal concerns of the Ostrava-Karviná industrial district.

The legal basis for war-time mobilization measures during and immediately preceding the First World War is not a subject which has drawn much scholarly attention. Mobilization measures are typically addressed only in terms of their application and effects during the war without much reference to antecedents in law or custom. The Habsburg Monarchy in particular has not seen any real work on mobilization measures. The literature on the causes of the First World War has addressed the increased military measures undertaken after 1912 in response to the Balkan Wars, though only in terms of numbers of men under arms and expenditures for military purposes.⁴⁴ Works specifically addressing Austria-Hungary's preparations for the First World War tend to foreground Habsburg military weakness, similarly in terms of weapons expenditures and manpower mobilization.⁴⁵ Very little has been done to date addressing Habsburg efforts to mobilize social, political, and economic resources for military purposes as opposed to strictly military preparations.⁴⁶ Historical work addressing the politics of the late Habsburg era similarly ignore the military, military planning, and military politics and issues

⁴⁴Perhaps the best work along these lines is David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁴⁵There has not as yet been any monographs or even article length works focusing on Habsburg efforts to prepare for the First World War, but more general works usually include a section along these lines as a coda to the beginning of the First World War. The first to advance this form of the narrative was A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: H. Hamilton, 1941). Most writers have adopted Taylor's formulations, and more recent examples are: Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975); Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers* (Graz: Styria Verlag, 1993); Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

⁴⁶Economic histories of the Habsburg Monarchy tend to assess economic trends but not economic mobilization efforts. See for example David Good, *The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Robert J. Wegs has treated Habsburg economic mobilization during wartime, arguing that transport was the crucial bottleneck which broke the Habsburg war economy, but pre-war planning has yet to be addressed. Robert J. Wegs, *Die Österreichische Kriegswirtschaft, 1914-1918*, trans. Heinrich Meizlik (Vienna: Verlag A. Schendl, 1979).

altogether, focusing on narrowly political treatments of political movements and political parties.⁴⁷

The theoretical basis for such an approach has been fairly extensively addressed by political scientists, sociologists, and historians. Harold Lasswell's original conception of the 'garrison state' pointed towards investigations of the ways in which societies under threat respond with moving toward a system of political and social domination by specialists in violence, though his concern was with the threatening transformation of the United States rather than historical analysis.⁴⁸ Vernon Dribble elaborated on Lasswell's model some twenty years later, arguing that a true garrison state is one in which the civilian sphere and the military sphere have become so intertwined that there is no longer any functional difference between the two – the entire society and all of its activities are fundamentally organized around the production of violence.⁴⁹ Dick Harrison has recently applied these ideas to Asia, Mesoamerica, and medieval Europe to complicate ideas of the relationship between military force and the society which generated and controlled such force.⁵⁰

The most useful theorization on the historical applicability was collected in one place in 1989, with the publication of *The Militarization of the Western World*. The editor, John Gillis, pointed out that “While there have been good studies made of social change in wartime, the

⁴⁷See for example Pieter Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries: Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austria Empire, 1848-1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); John Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna: Christian Socialism in Power, 1897-1918* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Lothar Höbelt, *Kornblume und Kaiseradler: die deutschfreiheitlichen Parteien Altösterreichs, 1882-1918* (Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1993).

⁴⁸Harold Lasswell, “The Garrison State.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 46 (1941): 455-468.

⁴⁹Vernon Dibble, “The Garrison Society.” *New University Thought* 5, nos. 1, 2 (1966-67): 106-115.

⁵⁰Dick Harrison, *Social Militarisation and the Power of History: A Study of Scholarly Perspectives*. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 1999).

processes of peacetime militarization have been largely ignored.”⁵¹ Michael Geyer's contribution, “The Militarization of Europe, 1914-1945,” attempted to lay these processes of peacetime (and wartime) militarization bare.⁵² He drew a stark contrast between militarism, which he conceived of as an outdated term emerging from 19th century debates between autocrats and liberals, and militarization, which he defines as “the contradictory and tense social process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence.”⁵³ He urged moving towards an understanding of the process of militarization as a politically, socially, and culturally contested process of enabling the organized deployment of violence, as opposed to a process which concerns itself solely with military colonization of the civilian sphere. One of the most important insights Geyer offers is that the civil sphere itself produces militarization – off-loading responsibility onto the military, while perhaps congenial, mistakes the entire nature of the process.

Geoffrey Best, in his contribution, offers a useful perspective on the specific issue of pre-World War I European militarization. He conceives of the core issue facing governmental and military leaders as being “the problem of bringing into the national armed forces and into conformity with the national readiness to fight the growing industrial, urban-based working class whose political and cultural preferences seemed likely to go against those of the ruling classes”.⁵⁴ These understandings of militarization do much to move away from analyses of militarism which locate drives toward war in specific populations or social relations along the Imperial German

⁵¹John R. Gillis, ed. *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989) 4.

⁵²Michael Geyer, “The Militarization of Europe, 1914-1945,” in: John R. Gillis, ed. *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989).

⁵³*Ibid.*, 79.

⁵⁴Geoffrey Best, “The Militarization of European Society, 1870-1914,” in: John R. Gillis, ed. *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989). 14.

model.⁵⁵ These perspectives further highlight the possibilities in analyzing the process by which the Habsburg Monarchy organized itself for the expected outbreak of a general European war. Such an analysis holds the possibility of reconceptualizing both narratives of pre-war Habsburg politics and of narratives of general European militarization before the First World War.

Eingedenk der Lorbeerreiser: Labor, Hunger, Collapse

In this investigation I have aimed to improve our understanding of the domestic experience of the First World War in the Habsburg Monarchy through a case study of the Ostrava-Karviná industrial district. I have further attempted to contribute to our grasp of the actions and methods used by the Habsburg Army and the Habsburg state to organize, mobilize, discipline, and repress strikes, protests, and other forms of opposition. The conditions of uncertainty and deprivation created by the war along with the state's attempt to maintain production and the Army's attempt to maintain obedience reshaped the political and social worlds in which the workers and citizens of Ostravsko lived their lives. This is the story of their engagement with employers, officers, administrators, and each other before, during, and (briefly) after the First World War.

I have sought to present a largely social history, exploring the actions of groups of workers, citizens, employers, bureaucrats, and soldiers. Limitations of space, of time, and of source material prevent a truly comprehensive treatment of the experience of the war on a personal level; I nevertheless aim to touch on the most important aspects of war-time life at least briefly. In the course of so doing, I engage nationalism only intermittently. A historian of the late Habsburg Monarchy cannot effectively dismiss nationalism as an organizing or inciting principle of social, political, and cultural activity. It is certainly true that national identity was hardly the

⁵⁵See for example Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany*. 4 Vols. Heinz Norden, Trans. (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970).

all-encompassing *sine qua non* of all individual and social activity that nationalist activists sought to present it as. Neither, though, was it the sole purview of small cliques of intellectuals and journalists. I understand national identity in the late Habsburg Monarchy as being simply one of many identities, the relevance of which could and did shift dramatically depending on the context. Sometimes nationalism mattered and sometimes it did not. More often, nationalism was a subsidiary concern, influencing or informing action in some ways without determining or dominating such action.

Historical scholarship addressing the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy has been split among two main explanatory frameworks. The first used a 'primitivist' view of nationalism to understand the Monarchy's collapse. In this telling, the unique structural feature of the Habsburg Monarchy was the presence of large numbers of different ethnic and linguistic groups achieving national consciousness and seeking to reify such consciousness in the form of independent and ethnically homogenous nation-states. This pressure eventually proved too much for the Monarchy, and independence movements broke the antiquated shackles of Habsburg rule over the various nationalities.⁵⁶

The nationalist perspective endured as the default mode of analysis until Gary Cohen's *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914*, first published in 1981.⁵⁷ While not specifically about the fall of the Monarchy, Cohen's demolition of the 'primitivist' approach to nationalism and emphasis on the constructed, contingent, and fundamentally *political*

⁵⁶Two exemplars of this thread of argument are Oszkár Jászi, who attributed the collapse to failure to create a shared civic identity actualized through a federal structure, thus forestalling nationalist irredentas from destroying the Monarchy, and Robert Kann, who blamed the collapse of the Monarchy on its failure to develop an "Austrian Man" which could serve as an archetype to unite the various nationalities. Oszkár Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929); Robert Kann, *The Habsburg Empire: A Study in Integration and Disintegration* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1957).

⁵⁷Gary Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1981).

character of ethno-nationalism in the Habsburg Monarchy has fueled historical work on Austria-Hungary ever since. Pieter Judson's work on language activists on Habsburg "language frontiers" demonstrated, for example, that the First World War further integrated nationalist political organizations into the state structure and de-emphasized nationality issues as loci of political conflict.⁵⁸ Tara Zahra similarly argued that the First World War brought nationalist organizations into the state structure as psuedo-state providers of social services rather than freeing such organizations to shatter the Monarchy.⁵⁹ Investigations using Cohen's new framework have, then, significantly weakened nationalist conflict's ability to explain the collapse of the Monarchy.

The second explanatory framework for the collapse of the Habsburg state, largely advanced by military historians, emphasized Habsburg military weakness and defeat. This framework typically foregrounded Imperial German domination of the Monarchy's military, political, and even social affairs, arguing that such subservience to German power doomed the Habsburgs to at best becoming a German vassal-state in the event of a German victory and at worst to being shattered by German defeat, Allied hostility, and internal opposition to German rule. A.J.P. Taylor's treatment of the First World War, for example, foregrounded German domination of the Monarchy's military, political, and even social affairs, and argued that the Monarchy's weakness and subservience to Germany spelled the end of the Habsburgs long before the collapse in 1918.⁶⁰ Norman Stone gave a similar impression of Austria-Hungary's war effort, painting a picture of a Monarchy careening towards oblivion, chained to a contemptuous

⁵⁸Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁵⁹Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

⁶⁰A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: H. Hamilton, 1941).

Germany and incapable of more than holding ground.⁶¹

Beginning with the focus on social history emerging from the late sixties and seventies, though, works on the Habsburgs during the First World War have begun to foreground the experience of the war upon and within the Monarchy. Christoph Führ's singular monograph on the Army High Command's role in domestic politics has argued that the Habsburg Army High Command met with some success in their efforts to use their wide emergency powers to reshape Habsburg society into a neo-absolutist, apolitical, and anational state, at least until the restoration of parliamentarism in 1917 and concurrent curtailment of the Army's domestic powers.⁶² Richard Plaschka, Horst Haselsteiner, and Arnold Suppan's 1974 *Innere Front: Militärassistentz, Widerstand und Umsturz in der Donaumonarchie 1918* argues that material deprivation and hunger led the Habsburg army to transition from a Habsburg-loyal to a revolutionary position in the last year of the Monarchy's existence. The loss of the Army's loyalty was, they argue, the decisive factor in the collapse of the Monarchy.⁶³ Manfred Rauchensteiner and Holger Herwig have both moved towards a much more nuanced perspective. Rauchensteiner's argument emphasized cultural shifts and the institutional changes in the Monarchy during the war, while Herwig foregrounds economic mobilization and the intricacies of the Dual Alliance.⁶⁴

Military weakness and even military defeat, though, are incomplete explanations – the war did not predetermine Habsburg weakness, nor how the Monarchy responded to its pressures. Nor was dissolution inevitable after military defeat; the Monarchy, after all, had been defeated

⁶¹Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975).

⁶²Christoph Führ, *Das K.u.K. Armeeoberkommando und die Innenpolitik in Österreich, 1914-1917* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1968).

⁶³Richard. G. Plaschka, Horst Haselsteiner, and Arnold Suppan, *Innere Front: Militärassistentz, Widerstand und Umsturz in der Donaumonarchie 1918*, 2 vols (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1974).

⁶⁴Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers* (Graz: Styria Verlag, 1993); Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

before. Another explanation is needed, one which explicitly connects the pressures of the First World War to Austria-Hungary's dissolution. This is what I have sought to offer.

Several important works have recently focused on how the war was experienced by citizens of the Habsburg state. Maureen Healy's study of wartime Vienna, for example, has demonstrated that the combination of material deprivation in the form of endemic malnutrition and goods shortages with increasing Habsburg demands upon the loyalties, goods, and labor of Vienna's citizens played an important role in breaking down Habsburg patriotism. The suffering of the general population in Vienna shattered understandings of the imperial polity as an imperial family, as it revealed the incapacities and failures of the benevolent imperial patriarch.⁶⁵ Ivan Šedivý's 2001 *Češi, české země a velká válka, 1914-1918* moves beyond the "Czech messianism" of much of the Czech historiography on the First World War to "concentrate on questions of the everyday rhythms in social life" in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia.⁶⁶ Though he aims to decenter the Czech Question (as he terms it) from his portrayal of the war, Šedivý does focus mainly on the historical experience of Czech-speaking people and Czech-nationalist political and social movements and institutions, presenting an invaluable and detailed overview of the experience of the war from that perspective.

The problem of food and food supplies in the Monarchy during the war has been the subject of a number of studies. The initial work on Habsburg food supplies was done by Hans-Loewenfeld Russ, who served as the State Secretary for Provisioning (*Staatssekretär für Volksernährung*) in Vienna during the war, in his 1926 *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege*.⁶⁷ Horst Haselsteiner has produced a more recent short study published in 1985

⁶⁵Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire: Total War and Everyday Life in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁶⁶Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země, a velká válka, 1914-1918* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2001) 1.

⁶⁷Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926).

addressing the mobilization of food supplies during the war.⁶⁸ Hans Hautmann contributed an article in 1978 specifically addressing the provisioning of Cisleithanian workers, while Jan Havránek examined the connections between political repression and provisioning problems in Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia during the First World War in his 2000 article.⁶⁹ The question of the collapse of the Monarchy, though, is not their primary area of inquiry.

Habsburg labor mobilization in the First World War, especially in Czech-speaking industrial areas, has not received substantial investigation. Labor historians investigating Europe during the First World War ignore Austria-Hungary, and what work has been done focuses on industrial workers in Vienna.⁷⁰ Margarete Grandner's 1992 *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik in der Kriegswirtschaft* offers an excellent investigation into Cisleithanian trade unions and unionism during the war, while Mark Cornwall has offered tantalizing insight into the Habsburg labor militarization during the First World War, hypothesizing that this mobilization was responsible for delegitimizing the war effort and preventing a secondary mobilization.⁷¹

⁶⁸Horst Haselsteiner, "The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Mobilization of Food Supplies," in *East Central European Society in World War I*, ed. Béla Király and Nándor Dreisziger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁶⁹Hans Hautmann, "Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch. Die Ernährungslage der österreichischen Arbeiter im Ersten Weltkrieg" in *Bewegung und Klasse: Studien zur österreichischen Arbeitergeschichte*, ed. Gerhard Botz (Vienna, Munich, Zürich: Europaverlag, 1978); Jan Havránek, "Politické represe a zádobovací potíže v českých zemích v letech 1914-1918" in Hans Mommsen, Dušan Kováč, Jiří Malíř, Michaela Marek, eds. *První světová válka a vztahy mezi Čechy, Slováky, a Němci* (Brno: Maticе Moravská, 2000).

⁷⁰See: Leopold Haimson, Charles Tilly, eds., *Strikes, Wars, and Revolutions in an International Perspective: Strike Waves in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) which addresses Russia, Italy, Germany, England, and France in the First World War; *Strikes, Social Conflict, and the First World War: An International Perspective*. Leopold Haimson, Giulio Sapelli, eds. (Milan: Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1992), which is similarly divided into French, British, Italian, German, and Russian sections; and *Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe, 1917-1920*. Chris Wrigley, ed. (London: Routledge, 1993), which does include several offerings relating solely to the last stages of the war in Austria-Hungary, but of the two one concentrates on Vienna and the other on Tyrolean peasantry. Gerhard Botz' edited volume is perhaps the best example of the focus on Habsburg labor mobilization treated as the story of Social Democracy in the Austrian crownlands. *Bewegung und Klasse: Studien zur österreichischen Arbeitergeschichte*. Gerhard Botz, ed. (Wien, München, Zürich: Europaverlag, 1978).

⁷¹Margarete Grandner, *Kooperative Gewerkschaftspolitik in der Kriegswirtschaft: Die freien Gewerkschaften Österreichs im ersten Weltkrieg* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1992); Mark Cornwall, "Morale and Patriotism in the Austro-

Historians of the Bohemian lands have largely ignored Ostrava, with a few notable exceptions. The long and sharp history of labor struggle in the ideologically privileged coal and steel industries in Ostravsko attracted substantial attention from Czechoslovak scholars working under Communism. Two monographs, Josef Kolečka's *Revoluční dělnické hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku, 1917-1921* and Milan Otáhal's *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku, 1917-1921*, as well as one edited volume, Andělín Grobelný and Bohumil Sobotík's *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku*, all appeared in 1957.⁷² These investigations are invaluable for their specific focus on industrial labor in Ostravsko. However, these studies are also reflexively Marxist in their analysis and teleological in their readings of events. To compound these issues, there is a lackadaisical approach to documentation.⁷³

Most recently, though, Rudolf Kučera's 2013 *Život na příděl* makes a substantial contribution to the historiography of Czech labor during the First World War.⁷⁴ Kučera focuses on four elements of workers' everyday life in his four chapters as experienced "on the dole" (na příděl) - satiety, fatigue, manhood, and rage.⁷⁵ In his treatment of the working class, he moves away from "macroeconomic factors towards the most variegated cultural variables which had an

Hungarian Army, 1914-1918," in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁷²Josef Kolečka, *Revoluční dělnické hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku 1917-1921* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1957); Milan Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku 1917-1921: Příspěvek k hospodářsko-sociálnímu a politickému vývoji ostravsko-karvínského revíru* (Ostrava: Krajské nakladatelství v Ostravě, 1957); *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku: sborník prací*, ed. Andělín Grobelný and Bohumil Sobotík (Ostrava: Krajský národní výbor v Ostravě, 1957).

⁷³In almost every instance I was able to locate the material cited, and I thus hesitate to cast aspersions on the accuracy of the research presented. It is, though, less than helpful to find a footnote directing one to a particular folder of the Police Directorate files and stopping there even though said folder contains over a thousand different documents.

⁷⁴Rudolf Kučera, *Život na příděl: Valečná každodennost a politiky dělnické třídy v českých zemích, 1914-1918* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2013).

⁷⁵*Sytost, únava, mužnost, hněv.*

influence on the origin and forms of the labor collective and its actions, and on the construction of worker subjectivity with the help of specific discursive practices."⁷⁶ As distinct from my own approach, Kučera centers the development of the working class and its class consciousness, asking "what kind [of impact] did the war context have on the transformations of the organized working class, on its culture, and on the methods which labor actors understood themselves and their environment during the turbulent changes of the war"?⁷⁷ Though the title implies otherwise, Kučera effectively ends his narrative in the summer of 1917.

In the course of his argument he unpacks the influence of shifting norms and understandings of work, of nutrition, of gender roles, and of modes of worker protest on creating and molding the class consciousness of Czech-speaking labor during the First World War. These experiences culminated in two strikes in the summer of 1917, in Plzeň/Pilsen and in Prague, in which workers' rage generated by radical shifts in the worlds of consumption, work, and gender relations expressed itself "in the concrete performative practices of the striking collective."⁷⁸ Beyond the overarching gulf opening up between workers' representatives in trade unions and socialist politics and the radicalizing workers themselves, the two strikes represented distinct models of labor protest. The Prague protest "remained a product of the pre-war tradition of organized working strikes" limited to "qualified male workers as the sole subject of working interests," a mode of protest with sharply limited prospects for success.⁷⁹ In contrast, the Plzeň/Pilsen protest incorporated a broad palette of participants of all ages, genders, and nationalities. This mode of protest, Kučera argues, offered a formative model of worker

⁷⁶Rudolf Kučera, *Život na pšíděl*. 9.

⁷⁷Rudolf Kučera, *Život na pšíděl*. 10.

⁷⁸Rudolf Kučera, *Život na pšíděl*. 153.

⁷⁹Rudolf Kučera, *Život na pšíděl*. 153.

solidarity, incorporated and empowered worker radicalism, and defied the traditional Social Democratic labor organization. It thereby offered a more compelling path forward for the formation of the Czech working class.

The Armed Prophet: The Foundation of Czecho-Slovakia

Czech interpretations of the Habsburg collapse and the emergence of the Czecho-Slovak state more generally tend to highlight the role of the political leadership in exile and tend to dismiss or downplay developments internal to the Czech lands.⁸⁰ Histories of interwar Czechoslovakia generally elide the question of collapse, representing the Czechoslovak Republic as a sharp but exogenous historical break with the past.⁸¹ The main thread of controversy in most treatments of interwar Czechoslovakia is the question of democracy. To be more precise, the question is frequently what kind of democracy was actualized in Czechoslovakia, and what democracy actually entailed conceptually.⁸² To date the industrial labor force has not been addressed along these lines. Treatments of the construction of the Czecho-Slovak state concentrate on a Prague-centric high political treatment that usually disposes of resistance to the Czechoslovak state within a page or two.⁸³

⁸⁰Two examples book-ending the literature are: Tomáš Masaryk, *The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914-1918*, trans. Henry Wickham Steed (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1927); Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země, a velká válka, 1914-1918* (Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2001).

⁸¹See, for example, Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006); Mark Cornwall, R.J.W. Evans, eds., *Czechoslovakia in a Nationalist and Fascist Europe, 1918-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), especially Mark Dimond, "The Sokol and Czech Nationalism, 1918-1948" and Jan Rychlík, "Czech-Slovak Relations in Czechoslovakia, 1918-1939." Derek Sayer and Eagle Glassheim also tend towards this mode of treatment. Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Eagle Glassheim, *Noble Nationalists: The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

⁸²Among those groups treated along these lines have been women, the aristocracy, the Jewish population, Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Ruthenians/Ukrainians in Sub-Carpathian Rus. See above, as well as Kieval Hillel, *Languages of Community: The Jewish Experience in the Czech Lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Jaroslav Pánek, Oldřich Tůma, eds. *A History of the Czech Lands* (Prague: Karolinum, 2009); Robert Kvaček, "The Rise and Fall of a Democracy," in: Mikulaš Teich, ed. *Bohemia in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁸³See for example Antonín Klimek, *Boj o hrad, 1. díl: Hrad a pětka, 1918-1926* (Prague: Panevropa, 1996); Zdeněk

My own emphasis on re-centering violence is a perspective that is substantially unrepresented in historical writing on the origin of the Czechoslovak state, and indeed in so doing I am writing against the most prevalent narrative in Czech history, what Mary Heimann has termed the “whig” interpretation and what Shawn Clybor has termed “*o nás bez nás*” (about us without us).⁸⁴ This narrative emphasizes both the essentially peaceful and democratic nature of the Czech nation and the responsibility of Austrian, German, and Russian domination and violence for the events of Czech history, thus absolving the Czechs of any responsibility for their own historical development. Czech historical memory both popular and scholarly has almost completely erased Czech violence from the foundation of the Czecho-Slovak state.

Sources

I have drawn from a wide range of sources in German, Czech, and Polish to support this study. The most crucial documents I have used are the records of the district's Police Directorate, held at the Regional Archive in Opava (*Zemský archiv v Opavě*). These files recorded an enormous amount of material regarding public order and disorder, policing and security measures, police agent reports on public meetings and the public mood, strike reports, rationing measures, official correspondence, police orders, and a host of other invaluable material. I have also drawn heavily on contemporary local newspapers, held in the Archive of the City of Ostrava (*Archiv města Ostravy*).⁸⁵ These newspaper accounts have filled in the gaps in Police Directorate reports as well as providing another window into the beliefs and actions of the district's inhabitants unfiltered by police agents. Also drawn from the Archive of the City of Ostrava were

Kárník, *České země v éře První republiky, 1. díl: Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky, 1918-1929* (Prague: Libri, 2000).

⁸⁴See Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011) 324.

⁸⁵I have primarily drawn from *Duch času*, *Na zdar*, *Ostrauer Zeitung*, and *Morgenzeitung*. These holdings are not complete, and I have thus in many instances been forced to draw on only one or two newspaper accounts in particular instances.

the municipal records for mobilization and food provisioning, including rationing measures. I have drawn on the private archive of the Vítkovice Steelworks (*Archiv vítkovických železáren*) in order to illuminate strike dynamics, the contours of labor, and the role of private industry in Ostravsko before, during, and after the First World War.⁸⁶ Supplemental materials on Habsburg military operations, ministerial conferences, and political directives have been drawn from the War Archive (*Kriegsarchiv*) of the Austrian State Archive (*Österreichisches Staatsarchiv*).

Structure and Contents

Structurally, the first three chapters take chronologically and thematically separate episodes and examine them in depth in order to shed light on labor activism, state authoritarianism, and ethno-nationalism as part of the broader evolution of Habsburg governance. The final two chapters, covering the First World War, are meant to provide a coherent whole and I have thus used a much more narrative approach. Specific important events - the strikes in April 1916 and January 1918, or the episodes of mob violence in July 1917, for instance - are examined in depth as important moments of transition. An epilogue then follows events into the post-Habsburg era through the conclusion of the Czecho-Slovak-Polish War.

In Chapter One, Cultivating an Iron Discipline, I examine a particular episode of pre-war labor activism, the 1906 May-Day strike wave at the Vítkovice Steelworks. This strike wave, launched in response to the Steelworks Directorate's attempts to squash and then punish demonstrations for the general franchise, demonstrated the importance of lived experience in formulating the parameters of political engagement and of mobilizing broader populations behind a popular movement. The course of this strike wave further shows the importance of the Habsburg state, which operated in this era as an arena and arbiter of political conflict rather than

⁸⁶The Vítkovice Steelworks also disposed of a significant coal mining operation, the records for which are held in this archive as well.

itself being on one side or the other; the pre-war Habsburg administrative state enabled rather than suppressed political engagement.

In Chapter Two, "Gut und Blut für's Vaterland," I focus on the character and legislative debate over the 1912 War Production Law. This law provided much of the legal basis for the militarization of Habsburg industrial labor during the war and determined to some extent its character. I argue that this law was constructed and debated in such a way as to provide a response to the security dilemma which the Monarchy increasingly found itself facing between external threat and internal paralysis. I additionally demonstrate that this particular Habsburg approach to preparing for industrial warfare reflected and maintained the social and power relationships extant in Habsburg society.

In Chapter Three, Blood and Soil, I focus on the final days of peace in Ostrava-Karviná in order to untangle the character of political engagement leading up to the First World War. I argue that the scripts used by political actors in Ostravsko to understand and interpret political activity became out of sync with the broader Imperial context following the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Escalating nationalist street violence took on an ominous character, and clashes with police and gendarme units created fears of an imminent crisis of governability in this militarily essential industrial district right leading up to general mobilization. These perceptions of imminent crisis justified and impelled a drastic police and military response to guarantee order and Habsburg authority, as well as to provide for a successful process of mobilization.

In Chapter Four, Abschreckung- und Besserungsmittel, and Chapter Five, Prisons to Compel the Labor of Free Men, I explore the experiences of the war years. Chapter Four focuses on the first two years of war, beginning with the experience of mobilization. I examine the

politics of repression, through which Habsburg civilians lost a wide range of constitutional rights and legal privileges and through which Ostravsko's industrial labor force was placed under military coercion and military justice. Individuals and groups suspected of disloyalty or opposition suffered arrest and dissolution. I trace the politics of sacrifice, as the citizens of Ostravsko faced shortages of food, of money, of customers, of jobs and then of labor power. The state began to take action to provide elements of a welfare state, as well as to take action against hoarders and profiteers. Finally, I investigate the politics of resistance, as miners, workers, and wives expressed dissatisfaction and dissent. Strikes, walkouts, hunger demonstrations, spreading placards and handbills, and even rumor-mongering undercut Habsburg efforts to mobilize and control industrial labor. By the Spring of 1916, desperation and hunger triggered an enormous strike wave that swept the district, exposing the limits of a strategy of coercion. Responsible officials in the government and the Army embarked on an extensive internal debate regarding ways to maintain control of the labor force, a debate which settled on a mixture of continued or increasing repression and conciliating gestures expanding state support for worker welfare.

Chapter Five begins following Emperor Franz Josef's death and Emperor Karl's ascension to the throne, and in it I argue that Ostravsko under Karl moved from dissension to revolution. Increasing public disorder and politicized opposition to Habsburg rule was used to justify increasingly bloodthirsty actions against resisters. The absolutist and anti-political ideology of the military viewed civilian protest and civilian organization as fundamentally illegitimate, especially in war-time, and frustration with the disobedient masses mounted as the war progressed. The February Revolution in Russia and the recall of the *Reichsrat* in May of 1917 opened up new forums for criticism and new vistas of possibility; promising for Socialist radicals, terrifying for Habsburg police agents. The pressures of deprivation and fear exploded in

July, with mobs destroying stores, breaking into municipal magazines, and engaging in street fighting with Habsburg Army units. The centralization of district administration under General von Naumann failed to stem strike actions or hunger demonstrations, and starting in January 1918 enormous organized strike actions with expressly political aims began to take place in Ostravsko. Independence, for Poland or for Czecho-Slovakia crept into stump speeches, placards, and political rhetoric, and by Fall of 1918 Habsburg authority had become a dead letter. Karl's declaration of October 16th, 1918 reorganizing Austria-Hungary into a federation of the nationalities, gave legitimacy to the various National Councils and National Committees who declared independence and counter-independence soon after.

The beginning of the Czecho-Slovak era was marked by the power vacuum brought about by the final collapse of the Habsburg authorities and the welter of revolutions and counter-revolutions which followed. German-speaking Bohemians and Moravians declared a German Republic independent of Czecho-Slovakia as Czecho-Slovakia declared independence from Austria-Hungary, and the nascent Polish state sent irregular military units into the region to claim it for their own. Miners and steelworkers raised the red flag of Bolshevism, and administrators and officers old and new struggled to restore order, feed the populace, and work towards their preferred vision of a post-Habsburg future.

Contrary to the accepted narrative, the foundation of the Czecho-Slovak Republic was intrinsically bound up with violence – violence against German separatists, against Polish claims to sovereignty, and against the miners and steelworkers whose labor was needed to fuel an economic regeneration after the devastation of the war. Against these threats to Prague's authority, the Czech Legion reprised many of the same methods pioneered by the Imperial and Royal Army during the First World War. The extensive use of and experience of state violence

which accompanied the construction of the Czecho-Slovak and then Czechoslovak state was nevertheless quickly swept under the rug. Czech historical memory had room only for peace and democracy, and Czechs would later remember the interwar period as a golden age.

CHAPTER 1: CULTIVATING AN IRON DISCIPLINE: THE VITKOVICE GENERAL
STRIKE OF 1906

*Red-hot iron,
White-hot iron,
Cold-black iron;
An iron taste,
An iron smell,
And a Babel of iron sounds.*
-Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*.

Labor agitation and unrest were not new to the Ostrava-Karviná industrial district. Though it had taken on many forms in the forty years since the development of the rich anthracite deposits of the region had begun, the years after the turn of the century saw a change in the character of labor conflict paralleling and reflecting pressures on the Habsburg political system. As in other European states, the manifold pressures of modernization and industrialization presented new and thorny challenges in Austria-Hungary. A complicated governmental structure and increasing ethno-nationalist political radicalism compounded these pressures. Nevertheless, Cisleithanian governance in the Dualist period moved decisively towards dismantling traditional modes of privilege and authority before the First World War. Mass movements and associations, enabled by changing legal frameworks and empowered by expanding municipal responsibilities and expansions of the franchise, weakened the exercise of arbitrary authority in all fields of life.⁸⁷

I here examine one particular episode in the long history of unrest in the area, the general strike following the May Day celebration of the 1st of May, 1906, in order to understand the relationships between Ostrava-Karviná's industrial labor force, the great magnates and managers who employed them, and the administrative and security organs of the Habsburg state. This general strike, though neither particularly apocalyptic nor of tremendous duration, evinces several valuable characteristics. First, unlike previous unrest in the area, this was an industrial rather than a mining strike, the first breakdown in the Vítkovice works' legendary iron discipline.⁸⁸ Second, this was the first major strike in the era of mass politics, and thus reveals

⁸⁷Robin Okey, *The Habsburg Monarchy: From Enlightenment to Eclipse* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001) 339-340.

⁸⁸This proverbial iron discipline was less due to tyranny than it was to the workers' relatively high standard of living. See Milan Myška, "Hutník," in *Člověk v Ostravě v XIX. století*, ed. Milan Myška, Aleš Zářický, (Ostrava: Kazimierz Gajdzica, 2007). 120-121.

something of the methods and structures that would shape labor unrest in the region over the next fifteen years. Third, as a relatively well-documented and self-contained episode, this strike is a powerful case study of antebellum labor relationships.

In this chapter I will make three main arguments. First, this labor conflict was primarily about power rather than money. The maintenance of a system of authoritarian paternalism structured and motivated the Vítkovice Directorate's actions during the course of this strike much more so than an economic calculus, and the destruction of that system was central to the goals and actions of the striking segment of the workforce. This is not to claim that economic demands did not exist, but merely to say that these demands were irrelevant to the beginning of the conflict and ancillary to its end.

Second, this strike demonstrates the connections between lived experience and political engagement broadly construed. The course of the strike and labor solidarity more generally emerged not only or even mainly from abstract principles but also from the concrete parameters of workers' social and personal lives; living arrangements, transportation, leisure activity, media consumption, language capabilities, family life, and so on.

Third, the Habsburg state was critical in establishing the context and parameters of the strike action. The Habsburg military and police organs were a counterweight to the local power of the Directorate and the municipal police, and the Imperial and Royal commissioners who commanded their obedience acted to adjudicate and enforce the parameters of the labor struggle. In this way, the Habsburg state acted as arena and arbiter of political conflict. As such, both management and labor sought to convert, persuade, and suborn the agents of the state for their own purposes.

General and Equal Franchise Rights: The Campaign for the Vote

The 1906 May Day celebration took place against a background of sharp political struggle in Cisleithania. Political paralysis had increasingly gripped the Monarchy ever since the collapse of Eduard Taaffe's so-called "Iron Ring" coalition in 1893 over a proposal to revise the franchise.⁸⁹ Increasing nationalist antagonism in the Reichsrat made legislative governance impossible, and as a result governance became in practice carried out by decree on the basis of Article 14 of the Austro-Hungarian *Staatsgrundgesetz* of 1867.⁹⁰ The ministry of Paul Gautsch, appointed on the first of January 1905, was chiefly meant to find a way to resolve the nationalist impasse and return the realm to a governable state. In part his ministry was successful; Gautsch's government spearheaded the 1905 Moravian Compromise, which created separate Czech and German electoral cadastres.⁹¹ In the long run, however, such reification of ethnicity into the institutional structure of Habsburg politics was to have unfortunate effects on the stability of the edifice as a whole.⁹²

In Cisleithanian affairs, however, Gautsch was less successful. Social Democratic party leaders in Vienna and in Prague marshaled their followers to place universal suffrage on the agenda, an effort that climaxed in massive demonstrations. In Prague, for example, a general strike on November 28th, 1905 contributed to the crowd of ninety thousand gathered in Old Town Square (*Staroměstské náměstí*) for representative Dr. František Soukup's speech calling for the

⁸⁹See: William Jenks, *Austria under the Iron Ring, 1879-1893* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1965); Pavel Cibulka, Jan Hájek, Martin Kučera. "The Definition of Czech National Society during the Period of Liberalism and Nationalism (1860-1914)" in: *A History of the Czech Lands*, ed. Jaroslav Pánek, Oldřich Tůma. (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2009). 346.

⁹⁰*Reichs-Gesetz-Blatt für das Kaiserthum Österreich* (Vienna, 1867). LXI. Stück, Nr. 141. 392. §14.

⁹¹Bernd Rill, *Böhmen und Mähren: Geschichte im Herzen Mitteleuropas. Band II: Von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart* (Gernsbach: Casimir Katz Verlag, 2006). 733-734.

⁹²See for example R.A. Kann, *The Habsburg Empire: A Study in Integration and Disintegration* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

free, equal, and secret ballot.⁹³ This effort was supported by similar protest marches and demonstrations in nearly every Czech town, though none reached the numbers of the Prague demonstration.⁹⁴ Gautsch's electoral reform draft, sent to the Reichsrat in February 1906, eventually failed to achieve a majority for passage.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the mobilization of the masses as a political measure had clearly arrived.

Demonstrations in Moravská Ostrava/Ostrau were proportionally strong. The workers of the Vítkovice Steelworks, though, were not present. This was no small matter. The Steelworks, founded in 1830, was the single largest producer of iron and steel in the entire Habsburg Monarchy, by itself responsible for an absolute majority of Austria-Hungary's iron and steel output and in 1906 employed over fifteen thousand workers to that end.⁹⁶ Vítkovice's blast furnaces and stamping mills were fed from the Ostrava-Karviná coal basin, the richest source of anthracite coal in the Monarchy. Over thirty thousand miners were engaged in coal production in Ostravsko, and some five thousand more were employed in coking plants.⁹⁷ Out of a total population of somewhere between one hundred thousand and one hundred and twenty thousand, then, almost half of the population of the district and a much higher percentage of the region's labor force was directly reliant on Vítkovice operations.⁹⁸

⁹³J.F.N. Bradley, "Czech Nationalism and Socialism in 1905," *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 19, Nr. 1 (Feb. 1960). 82.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵The passage of the universal adult male franchise in Cisleithania finally occurred in January of 1907 under the administration of Max Vladimir Beck. See: *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder* (Vienna: Kaiserl.-königl. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1907). IX. Stück, Nr. 17. 59-69. §4 of the *Reichsratswahlordnung*, 60-61.

⁹⁶AVZ/VHHT/154/861/Mar. 30, 1935/Zl. 330807/Statistika železáren. 15,200, to be precise.

⁹⁷Emil Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich Während des Krieges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925). XXX. Figures from 1913: 38,493 persons employed in coal mining, and 4,490 in coking plants.

⁹⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht." Jaroslav Petr, April 6th, 1916. 117,000 people in

The Directorate, the body of directors who dictated policy for the Steelworks on behalf of the owners, the powerful Rothschild family, prided themselves on their workers' "iron discipline" in carrying out their duties.⁹⁹ Socialist agitators and organizers had been by and large unsuccessful in their efforts to mobilize the Steelworks labor force either politically or economically prior to 1906, but some evidence points to the rise of the campaign for the general franchise as being central to the improvement of the fortunes of the organizers.¹⁰⁰ Their previous failures may be explained by the resounding lack of success met by the largest previous labor movement in the basin, a general strike throughout the district's mining operations in 1900.¹⁰¹

Mass participation had become in important ways a marker of strength – a movement that could mobilize the crowd was a movement that had to be taken seriously. One such movement was the industrial labor movement in the Ostrava-Karviná district. A great celebration for the the First of May, the high holy day of the socialist calendar, had been planned for 1906. Part of a Monarchy-wide effort to mobilize mass demonstrations under the banner of "World Ideas of General and Equal Franchise Rights," the May Day celebration was intended to both demonstrate solidarity with the "great family of organized socialist proletariat of every cultural nation of the world in their struggle for political rights and the fulfillment of the promise that electoral reform in Austria must be formulated in such a way as demanded by the necessities of life of the workers."¹⁰²

1916.

⁹⁹AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Ostrauer Zeitung. Tageblatt. 103, May 5, 1906. "Der Streik." 1.

¹⁰⁰AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 3, 1906/101/2/Der Streik in Witkowitz.

¹⁰¹See Růžena Vyhnaníková, "Generální stávka horníků na Ostravsku-karvínku roku 1900," in *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku: sborník prací*, ed. Andělín Grobelný, Bohumil Sobotík (Ostrava: Krajský národní výbor v Ostravě, 1957). 78-111.

¹⁰²Zdeněk Konečný, "Bouřlivý rok 1905 na Moravě," in *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku: sborník prací*, ed. Andělín

The scale of participation to be expected, however, had been in question. The strength of the industrial labor movement in Ostravsko (Moravská Ostrava and its surrounding metropolitan area) had been increasing, with a new militancy spreading among the various branches of the Vítkovice Steelworks.¹⁰³ On the other hand, the Vítkovice Central Directorate had, as in previous years, issued an explicit ban on participation in the May Day celebration to their workforce.¹⁰⁴ Participation in the May Day celebration would thus involve not only labor absenteeism, as plant operations were in no way to be curtailed, but would represent a straightforward challenge to the authority of the factory leadership. This challenge would be a novel one. Not only had the workforce of the Vítkovice Steelworks never before been allowed to celebrate the 1st of May, at no point in that history had the workforce defied the Directorate and done so. As the conservative *Ostrauer Zeitung* put it, “...such a demonstrative contempt of the disciplinary labor order has until the present moment never before been seen.”¹⁰⁵ The workers' involvement in the 1906 celebrations, then, was if not itself the harbinger of a new age certainly a leading indicator of change on the horizon.

Grobelný, Bohumil Sobotík (Ostrava: Krajský národní výbor v Ostravě, 1957). 186. *...světové ideje všeobecného a rovného hlasovacího práva...solidaritě s velkou rodinou organisovaného socialistického proletariátu všech kulturních národů na celém světě, solidaritě s jeho bojem za politická práva a končily slibem, že volební oprava v Rakousku musí být provedena tak, jak to žádá životní zájem dělnictva.*

¹⁰³This was k.k. Bezirks-Kommissär Dr. Viktor Gschmeidler's observation. PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹⁰⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 8, 1906/An unsere Arbeiterschaft!

¹⁰⁵AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Ostrauer Zeitung. Tageblatt. 103, May 5, 1906. „Der Streik.“ 1.

The High Holy Day of Labor: The May Day Celebration

The 1906 May Day celebration in Ostrava-Karviná took place on the first of May, beginning with “heavily attended” local meetings in every town in Ostravsko and followed by a general rally at the Hay Market, at approximately 1:00 pm.¹⁰⁶ This rally was attended by some thirty to forty thousand workers both male and female, according to a sympathetic count, and aimed to demonstrate the strength of Social Democracy in the district.¹⁰⁷ The turnout may have been less than otherwise expected due to inclement weather, but nonetheless represented a quarter of the total population of the district and approximately half of the district's labor force.¹⁰⁸

The ostensible theme of the rally, extending the efforts of the previous year, was the general, direct, and secret ballot, and Jan Prokeš, the keynote speaker and editor of the Czech-national socialist paper *Duch časů*, emphasized the willingness of the workers in the district to call a general strike in case the electoral reform then wending its way through the *Reichsrat* failed to pass.¹⁰⁹ He was followed by speeches by the secretary of the Mining Union, Vojtěch Brda, and the secretary of the Federation of Steel- and Metalworkers, Josef Pergel.¹¹⁰ Speeches were in Czech and in Polish, but no one spoke in German. Following the rally, a demonstration

¹⁰⁶“První máj na Ostravsku.” Ostravský Denník, May 2nd, 1906. 1. VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/

¹⁰⁷“Der 1. Mai in Mähr. Ostrau.” Ostrauer Zeitung, Nr. 100, May 2, 1906. 3. AMO/G04/20/1640/May 2, 1906/100/3; Konečný, „Bouřlivý rok 1905 na Moravě,” 186.

¹⁰⁸“První máj na Ostravsku.” Ostravský Denník, May 2nd, 1906. 1. VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/; ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). ”Bericht.” Jaroslav Petr, April 6th, 1916. 117,00 inhabitants in 1916. This number was half of the labor force of the entire district, not of Vitkovice manufacturing operations, which employed about 14,000 workers.

¹⁰⁹“Der 1. Mai in Mähr. Ostrau.” Ostrauer Zeitung, Nr. 100, May 2, 1906. 3. AMO/G04/20/1640/May 2, 1906/100/3/

¹¹⁰“První máj na Ostravsku.” Ostravský Denník, May 2nd, 1906. 1. VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/

march wound its way to the old city park, where a festival was held.¹¹¹

The underlying theme to the revelry and passion, however, was resistance to the very local economic and political power of the Vítkovice Directorate. This is not to disparage the authenticity of the agitation for the franchise. However, for the workers of the Vítkovice concerns, agitation for political rights was inextricably bound up with conflict with the Vítkovice Directorate.¹¹² The franchise was not an abstract political goal. It was understood as a tool for re-organizing Habsburg society along more congenial lines, not only as a way of mobilizing demographic strength to counterbalance economic weakness, but also as a way of bringing the power of the central state to bear against the particularist local power of the landlord, the coal baron, or the factory director. The *Ostravský Denník's* editorial line on the May Day agitation, for instance, highlights that “councils of fighters for civil equality in our *kraj* are strong and well-organized,” and that with the growth of these workers' councils “grows also our prospect that the brutal slaver's might of Germanizing capital will finally be weakened, that the Czech worker will lead to the vindication of his political convictions regarding elections.”¹¹³

These political convictions, implicitly here those of social democracy, aimed at a democratization of institutions and thus a devolution of power from the hands of the Germanized aristocracy of birth and of capital into the hands of the (Czech) proletariat. The power of the state, once successfully wrested from the hands of the aristocrats and capitalists, could then be deployed on the behalf of the workers' interests instead of against them. The state, then, was the

¹¹¹“Der 1. Mai in Mähr. Ostrau.“ Ostrauer Zeitung, Nr. 100, May 2, 1906. 3. AMO/G04/20/1640/May 2, 1906/100/3/

¹¹²PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/March 8,9, 1906/Dvě velké schůze lidu!

¹¹³“První máj na Ostravsku.“ Ostravský Denník, May 2nd, 1906. 1. AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/. *Řady bojovníků za rovnost občanskou jsou v našem kraji silné a nepřehledné, jsou imposantní...Dělnické uvědomění v našem kraji roste – a tím rostou i naděje naše, že brutální otrokářská moc germanisujícího kapitálu bude konečně oslabena, že český dělník dovede uhájiti své politické přesvědčení o volbách...*

field and object of political work rather than its enemy.

This particular episode of the long-running conflict began before the celebration itself, with the Directorate's obstinate refusal to curtail operations or sanction participation in the celebration even for those workers not scheduled to work. In a strongly worded declaration released to the workforce, the Directorate refuted “all false and contradictory gossip” claiming that the first of May would be a holiday and insisted on the maintenance of order and the continuation of work as usual on that day as on any other.¹¹⁴ In response to General Director Friedrich Schuster's explicit ban on participation in the celebration, the chairman of the labor confederation (*Werksverband*), František Zeplichal, called for a one-day work stoppage for the first of May, in effect a unilateral holiday.¹¹⁵ A work stoppage along these lines had been previously proclaimed for the 28th of November, 1905, but in that case the Directorate refusal to countenance such had intimidated the workforce into arriving at work as usual.¹¹⁶ This time, though, a much different outcome was to occur.

As a precautionary measure in case of unrest related to the work stoppage and the celebration, the Moravian state authorities in Troppau dispatched a twenty-five man force of gendarmes acting as an assisting force (*Assistenz*) under the authority of District Commissioner Dr. Viktor Gschmeidler.¹¹⁷ The gendarmes arrived on the evening of April 30th, in time to oversee the evening shift change at the Steelworks. The hour scheduled for the workers to lay down their

¹¹⁴AVZ/VHHT/60/359/Apr. 1906/An die Arbeiter aller Betriebsabteilungen!

¹¹⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...; Schuster's first name is usually given as Friedrich, which seems to have been his own usage, but it is also occasionally given in the Czech form as Bedřich.

¹¹⁶“První máj na Ostravsku.” Ostravský Denník, May 2nd, 1906. 1. AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/

¹¹⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906... Assisting forces was a technical term in Habsburg operations, denoting an armed body detached for the maintenance of civil order.

tools for May Day was at midnight on the 1st of May. Dr. Gschmeidler and his adjutant, Otto Kunz, thus dispersed the gendarmes and the civil watch personnel seconded to state control to the most likely flashpoints.¹¹⁸ Elements of two companies of the k.k. Infantry Regiment Nr. 1, three battalions total, had also arrived on the 30th of April, and were placed on alert.¹¹⁹

In the event, the midnight hour came and went without serious incident. Only a small proportion of the workforce laid down their tools for May Day at the midnight deadline. One supervising engineer sought to hinder the departure of some workers, but Dr. Gschmeidler forbade such hindrance due to the lack of a legal foundation for such action. It was the opinion of the observers that at this point the departing workers had violated no law or agreement and were within their rights to leave.¹²⁰

Although neither Gschmeidler nor Kunz specifically spelled out the basis of their conclusions, the governing ordinance was subject to some interpretation. Article 85 of the 1885 revision of the Cisleithanian Industrial Code (*Gewerbeordnung*), held that if a worker should leave his employment before the expiration of their contract without legal cause, then he is to be held in violation of the Industrial Code. The employer is then enabled to compel the departed employee to return to work for the remainder of the contract period and the employee is further liable for damages.¹²¹ However, this clause would only go into effect if the workers were in fact abandoning their employment in the sense of an immediate resignation as opposed to temporary work absenteeism. In the actual case, neither the workers nor the Directorate interpreted the work stoppage as a declaration of resignation, as the Directorate in point of fact later undertook to

¹¹⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹¹⁹“Militär in Ostrau.” Ostrauer Zeitung. Nr. 99, Apr. 30, 1906. 4. AMO/GO4/20/1640/Apr. 30, 1906/99/4/

¹²⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹²¹*Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder*. VIII. Stück, No. 22. Gesetz vom 8. März 1885, betreffend die Abänderung und Ergänzung der Gewerbeordnung. 42.

dismiss a number of the departing workers.

The morning shift change, at 6:00 AM, was monitored by the gendarme and military presence as well, but neither group noticed anything out of the ordinary. Following the shift change, though, at half past seven Commissioner Gschmiedler reported having received a phone call from Central Director Schuster. In this call, Schuster claimed that those workers willing to work (*Arbeitswillige*) were being subjected to a campaign of violence aimed at terrorizing them into staying out of their workplaces.¹²² There is virtually no evidence for this assertion.

Gschmiedler's summary of his own observations and the reports submitted to him by the gendarmes and civil watch personnel holds that the most that could be said was that some “small frictions had occurred, perhaps also minor fights” but that “a thoroughgoing campaign of terror is completely excluded,” noting also that at this point the number of Vítkovice workers still hard at work in the factories and smelteries was significantly higher than the number of workers who had followed Zeplichal's work suspension declaration.¹²³

It is unclear on what, if indeed on anything, Schuster had based his assessment of the situation. It is likely that he either was allowing his imagination to run wild by substituting preconceptions of bestial workers for facts or attempting to persuade Gschmiedler to crack down on the workers even in the absence of evidence of illegal activity. In a report issued five days later, on the 6th of May, Municipal Councillor Ziegler, of the municipality of Vítkovice and supervisor of its police office, lists four instances of violence being employed against those willing to work, in all four instances by “unknown workers”.¹²⁴ However, of the four only one

¹²²ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/(Various Polizeiamt reports, beg. Pospiech Karl). Municipal Councillor Ziegler, it may fairly be said, took his responsibility to Schuster very seriously, though his sense of responsibility to the people of the municipality may have been somewhat less developed.

instance, that of one Josef Vudelka, employed in the boiler factory (*Kesselfabrik*), occurred before Schuster's call to Gschmiedler. Even in his case, the putative event, wherein Vudelka was “threatened by a crowd of unknown workers,” does not seem to reach the threshold implied by Schuster's evocative use of 'terrorizing'.¹²⁵

Regardless of the inaccuracy of Schuster's evaluation of the situation, the gendarme and military units charged with the maintenance of the peace were perforce obligated to take the threat of violence seriously, and thus when Ziegler reported that Zeplichal had called on the workers leaving the morning shift to demonstrate in front of the Vítkovice Castle, the General Director's home, Gschmiedler deployed army units to seal off the streets.¹²⁶ Unfortunately for Ziegler's credibility, no such call seems to have been issued. When asked about it, Zeplichal heatedly denied the charge and personally guaranteed the maintenance of order as well as that the worker procession would remain in their normal assigned routes. In the event, the worker procession, some four thousand strong, went its accustomed path in “complete peace and order.”¹²⁷

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...; The castle, despite the name, was neither very imposing nor very defensible, though certainly a luxurious place to live.

¹²⁷Ibid.

In the Interest of the Maintenance of Discipline: The Decimation Order

That evening, Dr. Landauer, the Directorate General Secretary, admitted that the factory leadership had been caught off guard by the extent of the absenteeism despite the available indications, as multiple thousands of workers appeared at the May Day celebrations instead of the factories. Their complacency having been rudely shattered, the factory leadership went in to conference to determine the appropriate response. Their conclusion was decimation. Ten percent of the workers who had left their tools to attend the May Day celebration, some four hundred men, were to be summarily fired.¹²⁸

This decision was clearly meant to be both punitive and demonstrative. Punitive, in that the four hundred workers fired were not (as in Roman decimations) chosen randomly, but instead selected by name. This list, compiled in under twenty-four hours, targeted those known for their participation in social democratic organization or agitation work. Demonstrative, in that only a small number of workers out of the entire body of absentees were affected but those workers were fired in direct contradiction to the Steelworks' labor regulations. Rather than being liable to summary dismissal, "the explicit regulation of the Factory Council in cases of similar action [which is to say labor absenteeism] was first to be reprimanded, second to be fined, and only by the third repetition dismissal from work."¹²⁹ Though fealty to this process was certainly not a legal requirement, the Directorate's willingness to disregard their own procedures highlights the essentially political nature of the conflict. The very same act when committed due to drunkenness would be met with a verbal reprimand, but when committed for political reasons was grounds for immediate dismissal. The message was clear: obedience to the Directorate was

¹²⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹²⁹AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Rovnost/104/May 7, 1906. „Generální stávka ve vítkovických železárnách.“ 3. *Výslovným ustanovenám onoho továrního řádu tresce se podobné provinění ponejprv důtkou, po druhé peněžitou pokutou a teprve po třetím opakování výkazem z práce.*

the only guarantee of job security.

It is unclear whether or not Schuster and his fellow directors realized the consequences their decision would have, though it is likely that they did. The logic of the confrontation demanded escalation rather than de-escalation. Were the labor confederation to successfully defy the Directorate then it would have made great progress in breaking the credibility and thus ultimately the power of 'Germanizing Capital'.

It was in these terms that the establishment paper for the industrial region centered around Moravská Ostrava, the *Ostrauer Zeitung*, understood the strike. Their editorial position, summed up in their own words as “to us this behavior of the Steelworks leadership appears justified throughout,” took a strong anti-strike line.¹³⁰ However distinct their sympathies may have been from those of *Duch Časů* or the Strike Committee, they understood the underlying dynamic of the strike action in almost precisely the same terms. The *Ostrauer Zeitung* first held up their vision of an 'appropriate' strike - “[w]hen one these days reads of a strike, then one associates this expression automatically with the image of a wage struggle...who could get angry due to a worker, who for himself and his family wants to reach a more comfortable condition of existence?”¹³¹ This wage struggle, which they would be able to regard with hearts full of benevolence, regrettably was not the struggle that broke out that fine spring day. Instead, the actually occurring strike was “nothing other than a trial of strength...simply a political struggle, systematically prepared...not about material success but instead only about a terrorist-political question of power..” in direct contradiction to the Steelworks' previous record, “...notable for

¹³⁰AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Ostrauer Zeitung. Tageblatt. 103, May 5, 1906. „Der Streik.“ 1.

¹³¹Ibid.

cultivating an iron discipline.”¹³² The two sides of the strike, though fundamentally at odds as to their preferred outcome, nevertheless understood the structure of their conflict in very similar ways.

The Directorate may or may not have expected a significant response from their decimation order, but the police authority certainly did. When Dr. Gschmeidler, the head of the k.k. presence in the city, accidentally found out about the Directorate's plans, he immediately reinforced both the police presence, by twenty-one gendarmes, as well as the military assistance detachment, by two additional infantry companies. One company was deployed near the Walz Smeltery I (*Walzhütte I*), in close proximity to the Directorate offices, overseen by Dr. Gschmiedler. Additional companies were deployed on the Emilgasse, overseen by k.k. Police Commissioner Dr. Kunz, by the steel mill, overseen by Gschmiedler's intern, Otto Kunz, and by the fireclay manufactory, overseen by k.k. District Commissioner Dr. Karl Baron. The gendarmerie were divided into roving patrols supervising local civil watch personnel seconded to Gschmiedler's command on the one hand and to watchposts guarding key operations (electrical generation, the gas and waterworks, the fire department, and the scale works facility (*Modellschoppen*) on the other. These preparations, however, were not tested; no horde of maddened steelworkers stormed the factories. Indeed, no acts of violence at all, no matter how minor, seem to have occurred.¹³³

The next morning, the 2nd of May, each operating division of the Steelworks was aware of the Directorate's response and stood ready to implement it. At the morning shift change those workers selected for exemplary dismissal were sent away when they presented themselves for work and the shift was continued without them. At the brickworks, for instance, out of one

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

hundred and eighty six men reporting for work, thirty-nine were dismissed, leaving the shift shorthanded by almost twenty percent.¹³⁴

After the early shift change, the dismissals became widely known among the workforce and an impromptu strike camp established itself in the worker barracks, company housing where the majority of the workers lived.¹³⁵ Spontaneous walk-outs were the order of the day, a testament to the success of the social democratic organizers in instilling a sense of community in the workforce. This first wave was concentrated in bridge construction, boiler fabrication, and the pipeworks and hydraulic presses, which were brought to a standstill, and the steelworks, blast furnaces, and coking ovens, which nevertheless retained enough personnel to continue operating.¹³⁶ In this first wave of unorganized walkouts, approximately five thousand workers laid down their tools.¹³⁷

In order to fashion some sort of an organized response to this provocation, the Union of Austrian Iron- and Metalworkers, as the main umbrella organization for the employees of the Steelworks, called a public meeting for 3 PM that afternoon, the 2nd of May.¹³⁸ At this meeting, the union quickly decided to demand the immediate re-hiring of those workers that had been fired that morning, and to threaten a general strike in case that demand was not met. It was further decided to elect a delegation to be sent to meet with Landauer and Schuster in order to

¹³⁴AVZ/VHHT/1395/6047/May 2, 1906/Herrn Direktor A. Sonnenschein!

¹³⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹³⁶“Arbeiteraussperrungen infolge der Maifeier.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 10; AVZ/VHHT/1395/6047/May 2, 1906/Herrn Direktor A. Sonnenschein!

¹³⁷AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Rovnost/104/ May 7, 1906. „Generální stávka ve vítkovických železárnách.“ 3.

¹³⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 2, 1906/Svaz železo- a kovodělníků rakouských.

convey these demands.¹³⁹

¹³⁹“Arbeiterrassperrungen infolge der Maifeier.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 10; VHHT/1395/6047/May 2, 1906/Herrn Direktor A. Sonnenschein!

“The Terrorization Theory”: An Imagined Reign of Terror

Following the implementation of their decree, and presumably aware of the pot coming to a boil in the worker barracks and the Czech House (*Český dům*), the Directorate continued to emphasize the tremendous dangers they perceived the members of the labor confederation and their sympathizers to represent. The Habsburg Police Commissariat of Moravian Ostrava noted a report from Schuster claiming a plot against his life, reported to him by a certain Josef Höchsmann, an accountant working the pipe fabrication plant.¹⁴⁰ Höchsmann claimed to have overheard “a large number of Bohemian and Polish workers unknown to him” gathered under his window at around 6:30 that morning to plot revenge against Schuster's person in case of the failure of a worker deputation to arrange the rehiring of those workers fired the previous evening.¹⁴¹

Their plans were strikingly cartoonish. The crowd of workers were reported to be first planning a daring commando raid in which they would infiltrate Schuster's home through the rear gardens of the Vítkovice Castle and “attend to him.”¹⁴² Should this fail, their second attempt would involve overtaking and halting the Central Director's car during an evening drive, which would allow them to demolish the vehicle and would deliver Schuster's person into their hands. Unfortunately, there was at the time of this loud discussion under Höchsmann's Radetzkystrasse window no policemen or gendarmes available and thus the plotters, unidentified, were impossible to round up.¹⁴³

The ethnic and class dimension of this purported plot is also notable. Höchsmann, the

¹⁴⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 2, 1906/Friedrich Schuster, Witkowitz Eisenwerk.

¹⁴¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 2, 1906/Herr Zentralkdirektor!

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid. Assuming they existed in the first place, a questionable assumption at best.

German, was an accountant and thus an educated employee. It appears that he identified more strongly with management than with labor, both as a German and as a skilled worker. The villains of his imagined plot, then, were violent slavic laborers, the dangerous others of both his and Schuster's conceptual worlds. This incident thus offers a brief view into the framework through which 'Germanizing capital' saw the world.

Schuster sought further to bring the Police Commissariat around to his own view of the dangers of the striking workers in a letter to Gschmiedler on the 2nd of May. He brought two main lines of argument to bear in his missive. First, he sought to convey again the “multiple oral accounts of the administrative personnel of the Vítkovice police office” (of which Ziegler was the head), that the many workers willing and eager to report to work were being forcefully prevented from doing so by striking workers and their sympathizers.¹⁴⁴ These accounts, being oral, are unavailable for perusal both to the historian in the present and to the Police Commissariat at the time, but their provenance is doubtful as no other observer or body of observers reported anything similar.

Precisely the opposite, in point of fact. For example, Dr. Karl Baron, the k.k. District Commissioner assigned to the fireclay manufactory from the 2nd to the 4th of May and supervisory of the entire Habsburg security apparatus in the area from the 5th to the 9th, appended to his own report to the Police Commissariat his considered opinion, to wit: “I allow myself once again definitively to explain that not a single case is known to me in which workers were somehow threatened or forcefully prevented from working by strikers, and I have received the impression that each worker, which later left work or did not appear, has done this voluntarily.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 2, 1906/Zl. 18153/An das löbliche k.k. Polizei-Kommissariat. Strictly speaking his terminology was incorrect, as a strike was not officially announced until the following day.

¹⁴⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 8, 1906/Abschrift! Über Aufforderung vom 6. Mai 1906 Nr:

While not necessarily definitive, it is quite suggestive that neither Dr. Baron nor Dr. Gschmiedler, nor any of the forty-six gendarmes, dozens of civil watch personnel, or four companies of infantrymen patrolling the district and garrisoning Vítkovice had found any evidence whatsoever of this supposed reign of terror.

Second and related, Schuster invoked for the first time physical evidence, claiming that “in our factories a large quantity of injured persons have presented themselves, which testifies that they were exposed to severe physical injury.”¹⁴⁶ He then moved on to demand numerous patrols “energetically interfering” with the activities of the labor confederation, without which “the situation will take on a very threatening character.”¹⁴⁷ There is correspondingly little evidence for this claim. Imperial Councillor Dr. Munk, the head of the Steelworks hospital (*Werksspital*), reported that he had only seen two workers requesting medical care, both of whom were only lightly wounded.¹⁴⁸ Municipal Councillor Ziegler's comprehensive report on acts of violence perpetrated against those workers willing to work, fashioned only under duress, lists only one case of injury that occurred at the hands of striking workers during this period. On the first of May one Anton Sladeček reportedly received injuries to both of his hands severe enough to require convalescence leave at the hands of “unknown workers.” However, it was not until the 5th of May that he actually did seek convalescent leave.¹⁴⁹

Perhaps due to his absurdly exaggerated nature of his claims of a reign of terror sweeping the district, Schuster found little sympathy for his protestations and urgings. His fellow directors

5175 präs., erlaube ich...

¹⁴⁶ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 2, 1906/Zl. 18153/An das löbliche k.k. Polizei-Kommissariat.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹⁴⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/(Various Polizeiamt reports, beg. Pospiech Karl)

were of a similar opinion to Schuster, and each demanded a continual military presence to prevent the striking workers from storming the factories. Further, Directorate leaders went so far as to demand that Gschmiedler deploy the military to break up the large congregations of workers at the worker barracks and the Czech House, where the labor confederation's members were fashioning a response to Schuster's decimation order, on the grounds that the bare fact of their existence was terrifying other workers into staying away from work, the so-called “theory of terrorization” (*Abschreckungstheorie*).¹⁵⁰ These requests were denied, and indeed under the revised Instruction for Military Assistance (*Assistenzinstruktion*) such actions would have been illegal, barring violence on the part of the striking workers.¹⁵¹ The most violent activity to come out of the workers' meetings were insults more notable for their timidity than their shock value - “how does your goulash taste?” and “you work for nothing!” being far from cutting.¹⁵²

The workers' meetings remained free of bayonets and the six to eight thousand workers attending the morning meeting at the Czech House on the 3rd of May gathered with the wind at their backs. Two thirds of the Steelworks complexes had already ceased operation, including the machining plant, the smeltery, and the steelworks proper.¹⁵³ At this point between half and two-thirds of the Steelworks' labor force had already joined the impromptu strike.¹⁵⁴

Those present at the Czech House quickly concluded the resolution that the dismissal of the “three [sic] hundred workers due to their absenteeism on the 1st of May was irregular...and

¹⁵⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

¹⁵¹Ibid.; For Instruction for Military Assistance see: *Dienstreglement für das kaiserliche und königliche Heer. Erster Teil.* (Wien: Druck und Verlag der kaiserl.-königl. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1909) 236-237.

¹⁵²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906... The goulash here was implied to have been received from management in exchange for breaking the strike.

¹⁵³“Die Arbeiteraussperrungen anlässlich der Maifeier.“ *Neue Freie Presse*, May 4, 1906. 8.

¹⁵⁴AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 4, 1906/102/2/Der Streik in Witkowitz.

demanded the immediate employment of those dismissed, failing which a general strike is to be proclaimed for the entire Steelworks.”¹⁵⁵ A deadline of forty-eight hours was placed on the Directorate's reply. They then proceeded to elect a three-member deputation to present the demands to the Engineering Director Alfred Sonnenschein as the representative of the Central Directorate, which they duly did at noon the same day.

The Viennese *Neue Freie Presse* reported that Sonnenschein, speaking for Schuster, was not prepared to offer conciliation. Were the workers to provide suitable declarations that their absenteeism on the 1st of May “had not been directed against the Directorate's ban” and then were to all resume work immediately, then the fired workers could be re-hired after a duration of six weeks.¹⁵⁶ The *Ostrauer Zeitung* reported that during this conversation, the workers' deputation conceded the first point without a qualm, firmly maintaining that the workforce's celebration of May Day was “solely a demonstration for the general franchise.”¹⁵⁷

Despite this concession, however, the position of the Directorate as stated by Sonnenschein at this meeting was that the workers could not be re-hired, as celebrating the 1st of May had previously been forbidden, and that in any case the Directorate demanded a financial penalty assessed against the union organization, to be the especial obligation of the striking workers. This essentially argued that, whatever statements could be wrung from the workers, there was no hiding the challenge to the Directorate's authority and its determination to undertake punitive action against such challenges. Further, the deal to rehire the workers in the case of an immediate cessation of the strike was not a blanket concession, but would require each

¹⁵⁵AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 4, 1906/102/2/Der Streik in Witkowitz.

¹⁵⁶“Die Arbeiteraussperrungen anlässlich der Maifeier.“ *Neue Freie Presse*, May 4, 1906. 8.

¹⁵⁷AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 4, 1906/102/2/Der Streik in Witkowitz.

individual worker fired to come back in and individually plead for their position back.¹⁵⁸ An answer from the workforce was demanded in under six hours.

To meet Sonnenschein's 6 PM deadline, thousands of workers reassembled at 3 PM that day to hear the deputation report and to consider their collective response. Following the chair's recommendation against acceptance, the Directorate offer was partially rejected. The first requirement, to affirm that the absenteeism on the 1st had not been directed at the Steelworks, was uncontroversial, but the delay in rehiring the workers fired would force them to find some other work or starve and was thus unacceptable. Neither did the assembled workforce wish to endorse the financial penalties Sonnenschein demanded, leaving the union organization no choice but to carry through with its threat to begin a general strike.¹⁵⁹ Thus on the next day, the 4th of May, the union issued a declaration announcing a general strike in German, Czech, and Polish. This general strike, warranted by Schuster's decimation order, was to apply to “the workforce of all Vítkovice operations and to persevere in such until those colleagues fired are rehired.”¹⁶⁰

At this point, then, the labor confederation had embarked on a defensive strike aimed at restoring the status quo as of May 1st. However, the intransigence of the Directorate had already impelled a hardening of the workers' position, and increasing the list of demands was already being discussed.¹⁶¹ Similarly at this point, though, the increasing radicalization of the strike seems to have impelled some second thoughts among some workers, who would prefer a short

¹⁵⁸AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 4, 1906/102/2/Der Streik in Witkowitz. It is unclear how seriously the Directorate regarded their demand for a financial penalty against the union organization, or indeed how much was demanded, but as far as I have been able to determine this demand played no real role in the further negotiations.

¹⁵⁹“Die Arbeiteraussperrungen anlässlich der Maifeier.“ *Neue Freie Presse*, May 4, 1906. 8.

¹⁶⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 3, 1906/Zl. 5075/Tr/Zuschrift.

¹⁶¹AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 4, 1906/102/2/Der Streik in Witkowitz.

labor action aimed at preventing arbitrary action by the Directorate rather than a more extended attempt to bring the Steelworks to its knees.¹⁶²

After the declaration of the general strike, that is on the 4th of May, almost all of the Steelworks' labor force had joined the strike, between ten and thirteen thousand workers.¹⁶³ Similarly, some ninety percent of Steelworks operations had come to a halt, essentially ending production at Vítkovice.¹⁶⁴ Reports from Opava/Troppau, the regional capital, indicated that only about nine percent of the workforce, approximately 1100 workers, had arrived for work at the early shift that morning.¹⁶⁵

Several broader developments at this point merit brief attention. First, the Confederation of Austrian Industrialists (*Bund Österreichischer Industrieller*) held a plenary meeting on the 4th of May in response to the wave of worker unrest across Cisleithania following the 1st of May, in Sarajevo, Krems, Plzeň, and Vítkovice. The conclusion this august gathering came to was as follows: "...on the basis of the reports received on the course of the 1st of May, [the *Bund*] resolves to urgently impress on all industrialists to under no circumstances re-employ striking or locked-out workers."¹⁶⁶ Schuster, as the chairman of the Northern Moravian Confederation of Industrialists, very likely played a role in the plenary body of Austrian industrialists so firmly finding against compromise with their respective workforces.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶²"Die Arbeiteraussperrungen anlässlich der Maifeier." *Neue Freie Presse*, May 4, 1906. 8.

¹⁶³Sources differ on precisely how many workers struck the first day of the general strike. Both figures come from largely unsympathetic sources. AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Ostrauer Zeitung. Tageblatt. 103, May 5, 1906. „Der Streik.“ 1; „Der Streik im Witkowitz Eisenwerk." *Die Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 9.

¹⁶⁴AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Ostrauer Zeitung. Tageblatt. 103, May 5, 1906. „Der Streik.“ 1-2.

¹⁶⁵„Der Streik im Witkowitz Eisenwerk." *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 9.

¹⁶⁶„Eine Kundgebung der Arbeitgeber." *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 8.

¹⁶⁷AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 12,

The second notable development was the frustration of Commercial Inspector Peliček, who had arrived from Přerov as a representative of the central government on either the 2nd or the 3rd of May.¹⁶⁸ His mission was to negotiate a settlement between the striking workers and the Directorate using his good offices as a neutral party at least theoretically trusted by both sides. Unfortunately for the resolution of the conflict, the negotiations he headed “between the Directorate in Vítkovice and the strikers proceeded without result.”¹⁶⁹ The collapse of the talks followed from the obstinacy of the Directorate, who refused to budge from their conditions on the potential re-hiring of the fired workers.¹⁷⁰

The state of affairs at this point, that is on the 4th of May, demonstrated the hardening of the respective positions. The labor organization had declared a general strike, and the overwhelming majority of the workforce had laid down their tools in support. The goal of the general strike was limited to the re-employment of those fired after their absenteeism on the 1st of May, and involved no claims on the Steelworks beyond that. The Directorate had repeatedly re-affirmed their commitment to their arbitrary punishment of their social democratic workers and demanded not only an apology but also punitive fines levied against the labor organization and an immediate abandonment of the strike in order to unbend far enough as to allow the fired workers to return after six weeks without pay. Though mainly driven by local events, both the Directorate and the labor organization were connected to broader Monarchy-wide currents and organizations. The Imperial and Royal government, through its representatives Gschmeidler, Baron, and Peliček, had failed to resolve the dispute between the two sides, but had succeeded in

1906. “Dokumenty z Vítkovické stávký.”

¹⁶⁸“Arbeiteraussperrungen infolge der Maifeier.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 10.

¹⁶⁹“Der Streik in Witkowitz Eisenwerk. Troppau, 4. Mai.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 9.

¹⁷⁰ “Der Streik in Witkowitz Eisenwerk. Mährisch-Ostrau, 4. Mai, 8 Uhr abends.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 9.

establishing a peacekeeping presence to maintain order and provide a neutral arbiter.

“In Vítkovice Peace Reigns”: The Beginning of the General Strike

As the movement shifted to a general strike, the emphasis changed from organization and mobilization to settling in for the long haul. For this phase of the struggle, the central preoccupation of the striking workers was the maintenance of the strike movement, as at this point the contest was essentially one of endurance. On the part of the workers, the keys to accomplishing this were the maintenance of impeccable order throughout Ostravsko and the provision of sufficient food and funds to maintain the striking workers and their families in the absence of their regular wages. The Directorate's strategy continued to aim at the demonization of the strike movement as a band of thugs terrifying the 'silent majority' which putatively only wanted to continue working in peace, as well as launching an effort to divide and demoralize the strike movement however possible.

The maintenance of an unimpeachable order in Vítkovice and the surrounding areas was necessary to prevent public opinion from turning against the strike movement, but more importantly it was necessary to prevent the strike's bloody suppression by the security organs of the Habsburg state. Previous strike movements in the greater Ostrava region, in 1890 and 1894, had experienced that very fate.¹⁷¹ However, previous experience had also pointed out the possibility of a *modus vivendi* between strikers and the Habsburg military – during the great coal mining strike of 1900, the military forces in the district refused the appeals of the coal barons to move beyond peacekeeping and actively suppress the strike, and were eventually withdrawn from the area entirely. Even in the cases of the 1890 and 1894 strikes, the armed intervention occurred only following worker violence. The social democratic leadership from that era, now representing the region in the Cisleithanian Parliament, remained in contact with the Strike

¹⁷¹ Vyhnalíková, Růžena. „Generální stávka horníků na Ostravsku-karvínsku roku 1900,“ in: Grobelný, Andělín, Bohumil Sobotík, eds. *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku: sborník prací* (Ostrava: Krajský národní výbor v Ostravě, 1957). 78-79. These strikes were mining strikes rather than industrial strikes.

Committee and the local social democratic organization more broadly, and this experience may have contributed to Zeplichal, Białek, and Heger's thinking with regards to the military.¹⁷² It certainly composed a common theme in addresses at workers' meetings during the general strike period, wherein the attendees were “enjoined to perseverance and warned against rioting,” as well as in coverage of the strike, which warned against “the impudent, provocative manner by which [the municipal police] infiltrates the peaceful workforce and seeks to provoke disturbances, which would prove instantly catastrophic.”¹⁷³

This is not to say that interactions between the vast majority of the workers who had joined the strike and the few who continued to work unfolded with a vast cordiality and magnanimity. Striking workers were frequently verbally hostile to strikebreakers, with calls of shame or sarcastic invocations of goulash, the metaphorical wages of their putative crimes.¹⁷⁴ A number of examples of assaults, beatings, and threats also occurred; as Dr. Gschmeidler pointed out, “[s]maller excesses and beatings, which in the area are hardly rare even in the absence of strikes, could naturally not be entirely prevented in light of the great number of workers and the breadth of the terrain to be monitored,” but “[i]n general I remain by my claims that peace and order have not been disturbed...”.¹⁷⁵ Posts manned by strikers were positioned to cover the routes between the outlying municipalities where many of the workers lived and the grounds of the Steelworks, and these posts tracked and harassed workers without credentials from the Strike

¹⁷²Ibid., 88.

¹⁷³“Der Streik in Witkowitz Eisenwerk. Mährisch-Ostrau, 4. Mai, 8 Uhr abends.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 5th, 1906. 9; AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 12, 1906. “Všeobecná stávka ve Vítkovických závodech.” 1. *Drzým, vyzývavým způsobem do pokojného dělnictva vnikají a chtí vyvolati výtržnosti, které by mohli míti v zápětí katastrofu.*

¹⁷⁴ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 8, 1906/Abschrift! Über Aufforderung vom 6. Mai 1906 Nr: 5175 präs., erlaube ich...

¹⁷⁵ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

Committee.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, it is clear that the Strike Committee vigorously pursued a policy of peaceful and orderly protest.

The municipal police tracked all of the threats and incidents of violence following the 1st of May, and recorded forty-six all told, typically involving a single victim and split roughly equally between simple threats and incidents of workers being roughed up (*mißhandelt*). Very few cases were serious, though three workers (Josef Kubeczka, Peter Zacha, and Viktor Prochazka) were hospitalized after their respective beatings.¹⁷⁷ Gschmeidler underplayed these reports as reflecting a conspiracy of interests between Ziegler and the Directorate, who sought to emphasize what they termed the terrorism of the Strike Committee, and a substantial fraction of the workers, for whom a campaign of terror was a useful excuse for their participation in the strike in case it should happen to fail and lead to further reprisals.¹⁷⁸ However, even taking these figures at face value, some twenty incidents of mainly minor violence over the course of over a week in an area with over a hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom a disproportionate number were poorly educated single men, is hardly disproportionate.

The government officials responsible for the gendarme and military peacekeeping operations in the district seemed to be of a similar mind. Dr. Gschmeidler, in his report on conditions in the area, emphasized the peaceful nature of the strike movement as well as his own attempts to find a mediated solution. Though more and more gendarmes were arriving in the district (another eighty on the 4th), this was in response to Directorate demands for both a strong central presence at the main Steelworks installations sufficient to deter the mob of frenzied

¹⁷⁶ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Nr. 1887/M. Ostrauer Steinkohlengewerkschaft Marie-Anne; VHHT/292/52/May 7, 1906/Löbliche Zentraldirektion!

¹⁷⁷ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/(Various Polizeiamt reports, beg. Pospiech Karl).

¹⁷⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 6, 1906/Abschrift! Ich traf am 30. April 1906...

ironworkers which haunted their imaginations as well as extensive patrols for all shift changes throughout the considerable geographic extent of the district.

The second precondition for the maintenance of the strike action was the maintenance of the workers and their families. Success in the strike was now a matter of endurance – would the Steelworks buckle under the loss of millions of crowns of profits first, or would the workers be unable to subsist without their wages and be forced to come to an accommodation with the Directorate? In an attempt to ensure that the answer to that question would be in their favor, the Strike Committee on the 4th of May distributed an announcement that they would take responsibility for the distribution of funds the next day, in order to compensate the workers who had joined the strike for their lost wages.¹⁷⁹ The funds for this wage replacement came from the previously established strike fund for just such a purpose, and thus practically speaking the size of the strike fund limited the duration of the strike.

This presented something of a dilemma to the Strike Committee. Though they had their own strike fund, a general strike would quickly exhaust it and require further infusions of funds from the all-Austrian umbrella organization of the Union of Austrian Iron- and Steelworkers. The Vitkovice strike, though, had not been cleared beforehand with the general leadership, and thus unless and until the strike was legitimated by the Union no funds were to be forthcoming.¹⁸⁰ In the meantime, however, all measures necessary for the maintenance of the strikers were undertaken.

The Directorate had affirmatively shut down operations, informing those workers who came in despite the strike that production was “on vacation” until further notice.¹⁸¹ Both the

¹⁷⁹Ibid. The workforce was generally paid on a bi-weekly schedule, with Saturday as payday.

¹⁸⁰“Die Betriebseinstellung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 6th, 1906. 11.

¹⁸¹“Die Betriebseinstellung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 6th, 1906. 11.

Directorate and the Strike Committee saw this as a victory, the Directorate due to the increased wage pressure on the strike fund and the embitterment against the socialists of the minority of the workforce who wished to continue to work and the Strike Committee as it played into their portrayal of the strike as being monolithic. However, as a further consequence the Steelworks shut down the kitchens which served the worker barracks in Vítkovice proper, and as a consequence the Strike Committee established their own.¹⁸² The weight of providing not only financial support but also social services was lightened, however, by the departure of some eight thousand people. These workers largely returned to their native towns and villages outside of the district to wait out the strike with their families, an artifact of the rapid growth of the area.¹⁸³

Finally, and perhaps most strongly testifying to the seriousness of the venture, the Strike Committee on the 7th of May released a public appeal to the shopkeepers and tavern owners of the area. This appeal, “in order to secure the maintenance of peace and order, the undersigned [Pergel and Zeplichal] in the name of the strike committee appeal...that the general sale of liquor in taverns and in the streets be completely halted during the duration of the strike...with hope that there will be rigorous maintenance [of this ban]...”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸²“Die Betriebseinstellung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 6th, 1906. 11.

¹⁸³“Die Betriebseinstellung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 6th, 1906. 11.

¹⁸⁴AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 8th, 1906. “Odpor 14.000 vítkovických rabů“ 1. *Aby umožněno bylo dodržení pořádku a klidu, obrací se podepsaní ve jménu stávkového komitétu...prosbou, by veškerý prodej kořalky v místnostech i přes ulici úplně přerušen byl po čas trvání stávky...s nadějí, že přísně dodržována bude...*

For Bread and Dignity: To an Offensive Strike

It was on the 7th of May that the general strike shifted from a defensive strike with the sole aim of restoring those fired on the 2nd of May to their former positions in the Steelworks to an offensive strike aimed at attaining positive change in working conditions and wages. This was the high point in the workers' morale. The general strike had shut down the Steelworks. The wheels were stilled, the iron did not flow, even the blast furnaces were black and cold. Workers deputized and credentialed by the Strike Committee kept the electrical plant, which served the town as well, operating. Throngs ten thousand strong attended daily strike meetings. "The former bustle, whistle, and racket of the innumerable wheels of the Vítkovice factories, the thundering blows bow the hammer trembling the entire environs, the infernal music of the Vítkovice vale of tears, had been silenced."¹⁸⁵

The muttering about extending the strike demands had grown to a roar. Partially due to the general sense of momentum and partially due to an increasing sense that the mere revocation of the unjust firing of four hundred workers perhaps would not, in itself, justify the fifty thousand crowns a day in wages the strike was costing, not to mention the economic dislocations and secondary costs for the local economy. Discussions about wage demands and demands for improvement in work conditions had already begun several days earlier.¹⁸⁶ A general meeting, held at 10:00 AM at the Czech House in Vítkovice and chaired by Bialek and Heger, had been convened at Zeplichal's request in order to place the comprehensive list of demands before the ten to twelve thousand attendees for their approval. These demands were to be delivered to the

¹⁸⁵ AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 12, 1906. "Všeobecná stávka ve Vítkovických závodech." 1. *Dřívější ruch, pískání a hlomození nespočetných kol vítkovických závodů, hřmivé údery parních bucharů otřásajících celým okolím, ta pekelná hudba slzavého údolí vítkovického utichla.*

¹⁸⁶ "Die Betriebseinstellung der Witkowitz Werke." *Neue Freie Presse*, May 6th, 1906. 11.

Directorate that afternoon.¹⁸⁷

Of the demands, which were duly accepted and delivered to Chief Engineer A. Sonnenschein (Schuster having left Vítkovice), I will here briefly summarize and then highlight the analytically valuable clauses. The first main category of demands was a reduction in work hours, wherein the normal shift length for factories where continuous operation was required (electrical generation, blast furnaces, and so on) would be lowered from twelve hours to eight hours and the normal shift length for all other workers be limited to nine hours daily or fifty-four hours weekly. Each hour worked above this level was to be compensated as overtime. Further, the day before major holidays work was to cease at noon and on Sundays “only that work which is allowed legally is to take place.”¹⁸⁸

In terms of compensation, the workers' draft foresaw a significant increase in both base wages and piecework wages. Without going into the (extensive) details as to the specifics, the key point here is that the wage increases are couched in terms of crowns per day. While wages were typically calculated in this way, the fifty percent decrease in the length of the workday envisioned by the first set of demands would lead the increases in base pay to actually represent a very significant increase in the Steelworks' per-unit labor costs. Even without any alteration in nominal wages, concessions in the length of the work day would require the establishment of an entire additional shift (at least for continuously operational concerns), an on-face increase of labor costs of fifty percent. Piecework wages were also to be “so regulated, that these will earn at least as much for their eight hour shifts as they had previously earned,” though further

¹⁸⁷ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/Relation.

¹⁸⁸ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/Relation. That this was an issue is somewhat surprising, and speaks to a perhaps less than flawless adherence to labor law in the regular operations of the Steelworks.

production was to be possible up to fifty percent over the eight-hour wage.¹⁸⁹ Overtime work was to be paid at the same rate as holiday work, at a fifty percent premium over base wages. All work on Sundays and work on high holy days was to be paid at double the base wage.¹⁹⁰ Whether or not these demands were justified, they did represent a significant increase in labor costs for the Steelworks and thus of income for the workforce.

The most interesting set of demands were the general (which is to say not strictly economic) demands which primarily sought to address the dignity of labor.¹⁹¹ Of these demands, the first was of course the re-employment of those workers fired due to their participation in the May Day celebration, and henceforth the 1st of May to be considered a holiday (perhaps to prevent any more dustups as to attendance). Following these were a number of demands pertaining to the maintenance of working conditions through the provision of assistance, information, and tools. Among these were for the factory leadership to be responsible for deficits in materials or tools provided to piece-rate workers rather than the workers themselves. Professionals (in the sense of technical rather than white-collar professionals) were to be furnished with sufficient assistants, to be paid by the Steelworks rather than by the professionals themselves out of their wages. Further, smelting and oven workers were to be given gloves, leather aprons and coats, and eye protection without charge. Similarly, pourers (*Giesser*, responsible for the pouring and handling of molten metal) were to be given all necessary articles for their work gratis.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/Relation.

¹⁹⁰ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/Relation.

¹⁹¹ This distinction, though perhaps to the contemporary eye blurry and superfluous, was taken very seriously by the Directorate and their defenders as a means of delegitimizing demands which were not strictly economic by contrasting them with 'legitimate' economic questions.

¹⁹² ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/Relation.

In terms of information, the workers demanded that the piecework rate be made known to all of the workers at the beginning of the shift rather than only given to the shift foreman.¹⁹³ Further they requested that the number of hours worked and the amount of wages paid be printed on the wage receipt in order to document payments and thus prevent underpayment and other exploitative methods on the part of the Steelworks. Wage payments were to be weekly rather than bi-weekly.¹⁹⁴

The work environment provided also played a significant role in the demands presented to Sonnenschein. These included the establishment of bathrooms inclusive of lighting for all departments, as well as the provision of washing and bathing areas and lockers for the storage of clothes and food on-site. Further, clean drinking water was to be made available in all work areas. Tool repairmen were to be appointed in all factories for the maintenance and upkeep of the workers' tools. Finally, the worker congregation demanded “the strictest introduction of protective measures for cleaning the air, preventing great heat, and the prevention of accidents.”¹⁹⁵

Finally, the labor confederation demanded recognition of their organization along with official recognition of the labor confederation's delegates (*Vertrauensmänner* or *důvěrníky*). These delegates were to be granted the right to represent the workforce and to bring their wishes and complaints to the attention of management. Finally and centrally, the workers demanded decent, polite, and respectful treatment from their superiors.¹⁹⁶

The first point to be made here is that a number of the demands put to the Steelworks

¹⁹³ The piecework system was a way of farming out production – rather than hiring workers to be paid an hourly or a daily wage, “individual contractors” were brought in and paid by the unit produced.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

were in fact arguably already prescribed in law. Article 74 of the 1885 *Gewerbeordnung* requires that employers are obligated to keep working areas, machines, and tools “in such a condition as to protect the life and health of the worker, with respect to the character of the concern.”¹⁹⁷

Though certainly the final clause was ripe for interpretation, the prevention of accidents, heat exposure, and air pollution to the extent possible was a pre-existing legal requirement. Similarly, Article 75 held that Sunday was to be a day of rest, and further that “the necessary time for the workers to take care of the demands of their religion is to be allowed them,” a provision which seems ideally suited for supporting demands for treating Sunday labor differently from that in a normal work day. The wording of the demand, namely to limit Sunday work to only that labor legally allowed, implicitly argues that, at least in the view of the workforce, the Steelworks were already in violation of this clause.¹⁹⁸ Article 77 further held that the default wage period was to be established as once weekly in the absence of a contrary agreement.¹⁹⁹ Though not a legal requirement due to the existence of a contrary labor contract, the existence of a weekly pay period as the default in employment law serves as some support for this demand.

These demands, then, were fundamentally about the reconstruction of power relationships in Ostravsko, as indeed was the entire strike action. The newly acquired offensive character of the strike following the presentation of the workers' demands in this context derived from the final group of demands, for recognition of the labor confederation and its delegates along with the demand for polite and respectful treatment. The fundamental point of these demands was to permanently reconfigure the basic relationship between the employees and the employers of the

¹⁹⁷ *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder*. VIII. Stück, No. 22. Gesetz vom 8. März 1885, betreffend die Abänderung und Ergänzung der Gewerbeordnung. 36.

¹⁹⁸ *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder*. VIII. Stück, No. 22. Gesetz vom 8. März 1885, betreffend die Abänderung und Ergänzung der Gewerbeordnung. 37.

¹⁹⁹ *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder*. VIII. Stück, No. 22. Gesetz vom 8. März 1885, betreffend die Abänderung und Ergänzung der Gewerbeordnung. 36.

Vitkovice Steelworks. I emphasize these particular demands above the economic aims of the offensive strike for precisely this reason.

It is true that the core function of a labor organization is to provide a vehicle for the advancement of the collective interests of the members and as such the delivery of concrete benefits to its membership performs a legitimating function. However, in so far as the workforce of the Vitkovice Steelworks had and would continue to have collective interests, a collective vehicle for those interests would exist in some form. The important question to ask is then what form that collective vehicle would take on and whether and to what extent this collective vehicle would actually serve or achieve this collective interest. The answer to the former question is largely determined by factors exogenous to the industrial district, among which key determinants are: the types of industrial production, the legal framework through which worker agitation was enabled or within which it was confined, and the prevailing attitudes of those agents of the state responsible for exerting violence in the service of order.²⁰⁰

It is to answer to the latter question, namely how successful the labor confederation or similar organization would actually be, that I turn to the structural considerations raised by these demands. Most generally, the Steelworks' recognition of the labor confederation as a legitimate organization would then explicitly and implicitly concede the legitimacy of collective action by the labor confederation on behalf of the workforce. This the Directorate steadfastly refused to do. Though in practice the Directorate was forced to deal with the strike committee headed by Zeplichal and Pergel, they carefully avoided public utterances addressed to or otherwise cognizant of the striking workers as a collective organized body, preferring instead to portray the

²⁰⁰ See Tilly, Charles. "Introduction." In: Leopold Haimson, Charles Tilly, eds. *Strikes, Wars, and Revolutions in an International Perspective: Strike Waves in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). 3-13.

strike leadership as “foreign elements, led by selfish motives.”²⁰¹ At its core this is a question of power – the Directorate was much more comfortable dealing with the workforce as an atomistic collection of individuals, as each individual worker qua worker was not only replaceable but disposable and as such incapable of exercising meaningful pressure on the Steelworks.

The recognition of the labor confederation delegates as well as their right to represent the workforce and mediate between them and management was closely connected to the final and perhaps most interesting demand, that the workers' immediate superiors accord them decent, polite, and respectful treatment.²⁰² There are in a sense two connected issues here. On the part of the workers themselves, their direct experience of the authority of their employers came not from Friedrich Schuster or Alfred Sonnenschein but instead from their shift foremen. In terms of the tenor of their actual lived experience, the character of their everyday life, the attitude of their shift foremen and their treatment at his (always his) hands was dispositive. To improve such treatment would represent a marked improvement in the quality of life of the ordinary worker and as such would represent a significant victory for the labor confederation.

The other element here is the obverse, that that same hierarchical authoritarianism underpinned the Directorate's position. I am not here asserting that the Steelworks leadership faced down a general strike in defense of their foremen's right to be rude to their subordinates. This particular demand did not even warrant a mention in Schuster's list of the important points in the list of demands presented to the Directorate on the 7th.²⁰³

²⁰¹ For negotiations between the Directorate and the strike committee see ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 5, 1906/Nr. 2112/Pr/Streik in Witkowitz; description of strike leadership is AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/An alle Arbeiter!. In no instance have I found the Directorate directly addressing or acknowledging the existence of the strike committee in a public document. Several instances have occurred in internal Steelworks documents.

²⁰² ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/Relation.

²⁰³ AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/Da in verschiedenen Tagesblättern die Wiedergabe der von den ausständigen Arbeitern unseres Werkes...

I do aim to assert, however, that the maintenance of an order in which the Directorate and its agents gives orders and the various workers employed thereby take orders was in fact central to the entire episode. At its most basic, the general strike was caused by a challenge to management's authority. While some operational difficulties undoubtedly were caused by worker absenteeism during the May Day celebration, the absentee workers would have and in fact for the morning shift (before news of the decimation order had spread) did peacefully return to work the following day. No economic purpose was served by firing a broad swathe of those workers who had left work, nor by persisting in said dismissals in the face of a general strike. While one could argue that acceding to the workers' wage and shift demands would be sufficiently damaging to the Steelworks' competitiveness to warrant waiting out the strike, this elides the plain fact that before the 7th of May these demands did not exist and the sole aim of the general strike was to overturn those four hundred dismissals. Indeed, there is some evidence that the main point of the dismissals was not to rid the Steelworks of 'disloyal elements' so much as it was to humiliate and punish the workers who challenged Schuster's authority.²⁰⁴

The Directorate issued two declarations in response to the presentation of the workers' demands, both on the 8th of May. In laying out the Schuster's case against the striking workers, these declarations highlight the centrality of the maintenance of a paternalist and authoritarian vision of the workplace in driving the actions of the Steelworks leadership.

The first of the two, released to newspapers as well as placed prominently by the entrances to the Steelworks in placard form, begins with the bald statement that “this is primarily, as previously repeated and openly announced, in the first line about the raising of the

²⁰⁴ AVZ/VHHT/292/52/Undated/Die Arbeiter erklären... When fired workers were suitably emphatic in their disavowal of any challenge to the Directorate's authority they were to be extended the opportunity to be rehired on the 15th of June given the abandonment of the general strike. It is unclear whether this offer was formally extended to the strike committee or merely presented to individual workers trying to reclaim their positions.

question of power against the Directorate.”²⁰⁵ It was in response to this unbearable “opposition to discipline” (*Disziplinswidrigkeit*) that the Directorate resorted to immediate dismissal without notice.²⁰⁶ This dismissal, the declaration was careful to highlight, was “according to the articles of the Worker Ordinance completely justified.”²⁰⁷ The “section of the workforce” which responded to this measure with “the unauthorized stoppage of work” was depicted as a minority, exercising influence over the majority of good, loyal workers through acts of violence and threats of terror.²⁰⁸

With regards to the demands presented to them on the 7th, the Directorate had no give. In terms of the economic demands, they could not be fulfilled as they would “undermine (*erschüttern*) the requirements of production and thereby would place the competitiveness of the concern in question.”²⁰⁹ Those demands which did not touch upon any concerns which could properly be termed economic were also denied, as these demands “could not be reconciled with the basic principles, on the basis of which the Directorate allows itself to be led.”²¹⁰ Further, the statement declared that “[i]n no case can the frivolously provoked workers' strike influence the decisions of the Directorate in this regard.”²¹¹

²⁰⁵ AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/An alle Arbeiter!

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/An alle Arbeiter!; For the relevant law, see *Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder*. VIII. Stück, No. 22. Gesetz vom 8. März 1885, betreffend die Abänderung und Ergänzung der Gewerbeordnung. 41. Article 82 paragraph D allows immediate dismissal of a worker in the case of theft, disloyalty, or some other punishable act which renders him unfit for an employer's trust, while paragraph F allows the same for unreasonable abandonment of work or neglect of responsibilities, disobedience, disorderly living, or pursuit of illegal or immoral affairs. Both of these would theoretically have been applicable in this case.

²⁰⁸ AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/An alle Arbeiter!

²⁰⁹ AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/An alle Arbeiter!

²¹⁰ AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/An alle Arbeiter!

²¹¹ AVZ/VHHT/294/52/May 8, 1906/An alle Arbeiter!

The second declaration, Schuster's personal appeal to his workers, was aimed at the workforce as well, though not distributed to the press. While the specific language used differed from the Directorate declaration previously examined, most of the same elements are present. He did concede that the strike involved “a great quantity of our workers,” but still held that “the violent hindrance of those willing to work in the continuance of their labors has led to the complete stilling of our works.”²¹² Thus it was not that the strike was caused by the development of an endogenous labor movement which commanded the allegiance of the majority of Schuster's workers, but that an exogenous band of misfits and criminals had successfully managed to terrorize the majority of dutiful and obedient workers into abandoning their sacred responsibilities to Schuster and his factories. The May Day celebration and its consequences are represented as a “test of strength” and the decimation order was portrayed as “in the interest of the maintenance of discipline,” though he did offer something of an olive branch in that “re-employment [of the fired workers] by the immediate cessation of the strike has been taken into consideration.”²¹³ The demands presented by the striking workers “in all of its essential points cannot be fulfilled, partially out of principled grounds and partially out of considerations of the maintenance of the Works' competitiveness.”²¹⁴

Considered together, these declarations demonstrate the main thrust of my argument here. The labor confederation as a collective body is effaced from view, and in its place is substituted a dismissive reference to a minority of the workforce which managed to coerce and terrorize the remainder of the workers into submission. The core of the labor conflict throughout is openly admitted to be a question not fundamentally of money but of power, in which the disobedience of

²¹² ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 8, 1906/An unsere Arbeiterschaft!

²¹³ ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 8, 1906/An unsere Arbeiterschaft!

²¹⁴ ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 8, 1906/An unsere Arbeiterschaft!

the absentee and later the striking workers play the role of original sin. Any concession which would lead to a devolution of power, authority, or legitimacy from the Directorate to the workers or their association were not just to be denied but were irreconcilable with the fundamental principles under which the Steelworks operated. This is not to say that economic questions were irrelevant to the course of the strike movement, but they were not the central issue here.

Admittedly the basis of the workers' ability to exert pressure on the Directorate was economic, as was that of the Directorate's ability to exert pressure on the workforce. Such is the essence of a strike action. The details of the strategies pursued by the two opponents, though, were more complex than a simple attempt at taking millions of crowns hostage. Two elements of the labor confederation strategy are important to mention in this context, namely the emphasis on unity and the attempt to enlist the support or at least the neutrality of state authorities.

First, one of the key preconditions for a successful strike action as well as for the ability of the labor confederation to legitimately claim to speak on behalf of the entire workforce was the participation of the vast majority of the workforce in the strike action. While total participation was not strictly necessary, enough workers had to strike to force the Steelworks to cease production.²¹⁵ By the Monday following the declaration of the general strike (the 6th) this had in fact been accomplished. Enough workers had joined the strike movement that “work ceased completely in all factories...[t]hose workers who turn up to work voluntarily these days are given vacation by the factory Directorate for the duration of the strike.”²¹⁶

This is not to say that the entire body of the workforce was squarely behind Pergel and

²¹⁵ Critical infrastructure maintenance was an exception to the general strike, and in fact sufficient workers to keep these concerns (waterworks, gasworks) operational were detailed to continue work by the strike committee. See AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 8th, 1906. “Odpor 14.000 vítkovických rabů.” 1.

²¹⁶ AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 8th, 1906. “Odpor 14.000 vítkovických rabů.” 1. Reprint of k.k. Police Commissariate report.

Zeplichal's leadership. There existed internal rifts in the unity of the workforce as well, and mobilizing these rifts to break down the morale and unity of the strike was one of the Directorate's key strategies. One element of the workforce was composed primarily of cynics. These workers, unconvinced by socialist rhetoric, largely unconcerned with broader political issues, and personally hostile to the strike leadership (Prokeš, Zeplichal, and Bialek came in for especially vituperative denunciations), expected nothing to result from the strike except their own impoverishment. For these workers, the longer the duration of the strike the emptier their own pockets. The hope of an expansion of the strike to the coal mining areas of the district they named a delusion and the final outcome of the strike was that the workers would “return to work empty-handed and the strike committee with the strike funds will escape to Vienna.”²¹⁷

The second challenge to the labor confederation came from the so-called Implementation Committee. Based out of the Restaurant Hausner in Vítkovice, this committee endeavored to undercut the strike action. Their characterization of the strike action was reminiscent of Schuster's, with an emphasis on the economic deprivation brought about by the cessation of work. This “bitterest extremity” had further been imposed by the “terroristic goad of the socialist agitators,” who had cruelly and with malice aforethought prevented the undersigned workers “fulfilling their labor obligations.”²¹⁸ This sense of obligation to the Steelworks may have been a bridge too far for their credibility with the broader workforce, however.

Their proposed remedy to all this unpleasantness was to gather all willing workers together and return to work unconditionally, asking the mediation of the Imperial and Royal administration to “give those willing to work the possibility to go to work and thereby to shield

²¹⁷ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7th, 1906/Dělnici! Krkavci cítí kořist! It is unclear how extensive this faction was. As it happened, their forecasts were somewhat more accurate than those of the rest of the workforce, though unlike the 1900 strike referenced the strike committee remained in Ostravsko.

²¹⁸ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/An die Arbeiterschaft-Na Dělnictvo.

their families from economic ruin.”²¹⁹ The likelihood of the Steelworks Directorate agreeing to their return seems to have been high, though their credibility with the workforce as a whole seems to have been low. The primary warrant for this assessment was the Implementation Committee's having been secretly in the Directorate's employ, though not so secretly that the striking workers were unaware of this relationship.²²⁰

The Strike Committee, as the Implementation Committee and the Directorate, was well aware that the position taken by the Imperial and Royal administration and thus the gendarme and military forces under their control would be critical to the course of events. I have already highlighted the Directorate's attempts to turn the Habsburg security forces against the labor confederation through fantastic conjurations of campaigns of terror and fictionalized victims thereof. That Gschmiedler, Baron, Kunz, and Nowotny had refused to deploy the Imperial and Royal infantry companies under their command against the striking workers or to disrupt and prevent their meetings allowed the strike the space within which to exist. Further, these officials offered both neutral observers and impartial arbiters.

This point was not lost on the workforce, and indeed on several occasions the labor confederation lauded the gendarmes and the military for their even-handedness and restraint. Some evidence suggests that these state security organs were in fact seen as a positive presence for the strike, in that they offered a counterweight to the thoroughly controlled municipal police force and their fabulist commanding officer Ziegler.²²¹ The workers accused Municipal

²¹⁹ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/An die Arbeiterschaft-Na Dělnictvo.

²²⁰ A draft of the Implementation Committee's proclamation was found in the internal files of the Vítkovice Steelworks with hand-written edits which appear in the final placard. See VHHT/292/52/Undated/An die Arbeiterschaft der Witkowitz Eisenwerke!; For the labor confederation being aware of that the Implementation Committee was serving “the villainous hangmen of the Vítkovice workers [as] strikebreaking agents,” see AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 8th, 1906. “Odpor 14.000 vítkovických rabů.” 1.

²²¹ ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 146/Sig. 133/May 7, 1906/Relation

Councillor Ziegler and his police of being the “cossacks of the Vítkovice Czar,” and complained bitterly about police assaults on workers.²²² The socialist press went so far as to call out policemen of particular infamy specifically, such as officers Nr. 4, 7, 20, and 24.²²³ Against this kind of provocation and selective policing, the only real remedy was the support or benevolent neutrality of the Habsburg security forces. Pergel and Zeplichal were well aware that in order to maintain cordial relations with these forces the striking workers would perforce have to be on their best behavior - “the most flawlessly maintained peace is called for for the comfort of the military.”²²⁴ It was by maintaining peace and order that the Directorate's claims of terror campaigns fell flat, and the immediate presence of impartial observers that ensured scrutiny of Directorate claims. In this the Strike Committee was successful. Though the municipal police force continued to harass the strikers, arresting and charging a number of them, the strike was not suppressed at bayonet point by either local or Habsburg forces, and the Habsburg gendarmes made no arrests.²²⁵ The contest would work itself out on the level of economic coercion rather than physical violence.

²²² AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 12, 1906. “Všeobecná stávka ve Vítkovických závodech.” 1.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 10, 1906/107/3/Lokales. Der Streik in Witkowitz. 3. I have found no record of arrests or prosecutions in the Police Commissariat files.

The Drowning Clutch Also at Straws: The End of the Strike

The high morale of the previous week was a short-lived phenomenon. The impressive organization of the strike kitchens and the strike offices and most pertinently the strike wage subsidies were causing the strike fund to hemorrhage crowns, and funds from the national organization were not forthcoming. Further, the Directorate unbent slightly, offering on the 8th to move the date for the re-hiring of those workers fired in case of an immediate resumption of work from the 15th of June to the 15th of May, which is to say less than a week later.²²⁶ The general meeting on the 9th of May, called to consider this offer, saw a sharp split between those workers who offered a hostile reception, viewing this offer as a sign of weakness and evidence that the strike was beginning to tell, and those workers who, less militant, argued that the re-hiring of these workers was the point of the strike in the first place and if the Directorate was willing to concede that then there was no point in continuing with a chancy strike.²²⁷

In the meantime, more and more workers began to trickle back into the factories, the general closure having been revoked in the meantime. Some two thousand workers were present for work on the 10th of May, and that morning the General Secretary of the Industrial Commission of the Steel- and Metalworkers Union, Anton Hueber, and the Commission Chair, Franz Domes, arrived in Vítkovice bearing the news that the all-Austrian Federation of Steel- and Metalworkers had denied sanction to the strike and urging a negotiated settlement.²²⁸ At the strike meeting that afternoon the Strike Committee therefore implored the workers “to endure in the strike and rely on the Strike Committee, which would strive to achieve as much as possible

²²⁶ “Die Schliessung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 10th, 1906. 8. This was likely due to the good offices of Court Councillor Dombrowski, who had recently arrived in order to mediate.

²²⁷ “Die Schliessung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 10th, 1906. 8.

²²⁸ AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 10, 1906/107/3/Lokales. Der Streik in Witkowitz. 3.

for the workers.”²²⁹ In the meantime, the committee exerted its influence in order to guarantee that the local storekeepers would continue to extend goods to the striking workers on credit, and engaged in long discussions with Court Councillor Dombrowski, serving as mediator on behalf of the Imperial and Royal administration.²³⁰

On the morning of the 11th of May, a Friday, a labor meeting was held in the gardens of the Czech House. On the agenda was the end of the strike. The Strike Committee had undergone a *volte-face* and now urged the abandonment of the strike if the Directorate would commit to rehiring the workers fired on the 1st of May on the 15th of May. The assembled workers were quite unhappy with what they saw as a betrayal, but nevertheless a deputation was elected to take the offer to Schuster. His position had softened from the height of the strike as well, and he told the deputation that “the Directorate, were the workforce to return to work unconditionally, that [the Directorate] would hold to their assurances regarding the rehiring of the fired workers and no one would be punished due to the strike.”²³¹

The deputation returned to present the Directorate's offer at another meeting that evening, and it was decided to recess for the evening and reconvene the next day for the final decision.²³² By the time that meeting convened, a majority of the workers had reconciled themselves to the necessity of ceasing the strike, with only the core day laborers and iron-workers resisting resumption of work.²³³ Those present in the end voted to accept the Directorate's offer to re-hire

²²⁹ “Die Schliessung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 11th, 1906. 7.

²³⁰ “Die Schliessung der Witkowitz Werke.” *Neue Freie Presse*, May 11th, 1906. 7.

²³¹ AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 11, 1906/108/2/Lokales. Der Streik in Witkowitz. 2.

²³² AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 12, 1906/109/3/Der Streik in Witkowitz. 3.

²³³ AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 12, 1906/109/3/Der Streik in Witkowitz. 3.

those workers fired, cease the strike, and return to work on Monday morning.²³⁴

The labor confederation had not been prepared for a confrontation of this magnitude, and the strike funds had been depleted after only two weeks. In the face of an intransigent Directorate, no further gains could be expected, the all-Austrian labor organization was urging a compromise, and the Directorate had in fact conceded the central point of the original strike action, and thus a return to work seemed the only course of action.²³⁵ When adjudged by the demands of the offensive strike presented on the 7th of May, the strike must be understood as a failure. However, if seen as a defensive strike (as it was between the 3rd and the 7th), the strike was successful, as the four hundred workers dismissed on the 2nd were re-hired in the end.²³⁶

The reintegration of the striking workers back into the productive rhythms of the factory operations proceeded smoothly once the decision had been made.²³⁷ The direct economic costs to the workers as a body were over fifty thousand crowns a day in lost wages and some additional sum of debts assumed in the absence of wages.²³⁸ However, though the strike ended in a demoralizing fashion and the (in parts excessive) offensive strike demands were not achieved, the Strike Committee had both demonstrated an impressive organizational and mobilizational capacity and compelled the Directorate to give in to their primary demand. In terms of the structure of authority, then, the strike served to establish clear limits on the Directorate's ability

²³⁴ AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Duch času, May 16th, 1906. "Veliky boj vítkovického dělnictva ukončen." 1.

²³⁵ AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Deutsche Arbeiter-Zeitung, May 26th, 1906. "Streiklehren." 2.

²³⁶ AVZ/VHHT/52/293/Noviny, pojednávající a dělnickém hnutí a stávkách v železárnách/1906/Ostravský Denník, May 14th, 1906. "Opětné zahájení práce ve Vítkovicích." 5.

²³⁷ AVZ/VHHT/1395/6047/May 11, 1906/Löbliche Direktion zu Handen Herrn Zentralkdirektor F. Schuster!; AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 14, 1906/110/3/Die Lage in Witkowitz. 3.

²³⁸ AMO/GO4/20/1640/Ostrauer Zeitung/May 12, 1906/109/1-2/Der Streik. 1.

to arbitrarily punish their workers enforced by collective response. Further, the striking workers established and maintained a cordial working relationship with the Imperial and Royal security organs dispatched to the district. Throughout the course of the strike, the Habsburg officials exhibited more sympathy for the organized, orderly, and peaceful workforce than for the Directorate and its urgings to drown the strike in the blood of their workers. Unlike the municipal police force, the military and gendarmerie were quite happy to give the strike space in which to exist, while the leadership cultivated personal contacts with the Strike Committee and consistently sought to mediate between the two factions.

This episode demonstrates the importance of the central government in counteracting particularist power as well as the character of late Habsburg rule. Though both the Directorate and the Strike Committee sunk substantial effort into persuading Habsburg officials to adopt their point of view, these officials took no position or interest in the substance of the dispute. Rather, they acted as impartial mediators and observers as well as guarantors of the safety and security of the workforce, plant management, Vítkovice's physical plant, and the general population. They additionally acted to protect the right to assemble and to strike without which the entire episode could not have occurred. This, then, serves as an example of late Habsburg governance providing a framework for civil actors to engage in contestation.

Finally, the May Day strike uncovers important aspects of the lived experience of Ostravsko's industrial workforce. Participation in the May Day celebrations demonstrated engagement with broad political questions dealing with the future of Austria-Hungary and thus a self-consciousness as political actors on the part of the workers. Solidarity among the workers, both impromptu and organized, showed high levels of social cohesion. This cohesion stemmed from a number of different factors, but several important threads brought out here are ethnic

solidarity, class solidarity, and geographical proximity.

Ethnic and class solidarity are here somewhat intertwined. The managerial and administrative positions were dominated by German-speaking workers, while the technical and labor positions were overwhelmingly occupied by Slavic-speakers, with Czech-speakers predominating in technical positions and Polish-speakers (mainly Galician immigrants) making up the bulk of the unskilled laborer population. Hence the pronounced class difference tended to map along ethnic divides. The experience of work further tended to reinforce class solidarity, as the various strike demands for bathrooms, protective gear, lighting, and transparent wages attest. Shared hardships and frustrations along with a readily identifiable external agent responsible reinforced a sense of cohesion.

Geographical proximity also played a role in fueling engagement and cohesion. The physical concentration of the bulk of the workforce in company housing in Vítkovice itself helped translate workplace concerns into leisure-time concerns, rather than fostering a divide between work life and home life. Workers lived together and ate together in company kitchens as well as working together. The rapid response to the Directorate's decimation order was only possible because of the workforce's physical proximity, and that same physical proximity likely reinforced worker solidarity during the strike.

Though this strike did not have long-lasting consequences for the Ostrava-Karwiná district, it nonetheless reveals much about the character of the district, of its inhabitants, and of its era. The entrenched power of the owners and managers of the heavy industrial concerns which made the district rich as well as consequential in the councils of the Monarchy would persist, though not unchanged or unchallenged, until the end of the Monarchy. The workers' cohesion and political engagement would continue as well, and would play an important role in

the district's experience of the First World War. The radical reorientation of the role of the state following the outbreak of war in 1914, though, would fundamentally reshape the context of worker activism and the lived experience of labor.

CHAPTER TWO: "GUT UND BLUT FÜR'S VATERLAND": HABSBURG MILITARIZATION
POLICY AND THE WAR PRODUCTION LAW OF 1912

Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori.

It is good and fitting to die for one's fatherland.
-Horace.

The War Production Law of December 26th, 1912 formed the legal basis for a far-reaching military-administrative regime which, in the First World War, was to undergird the Habsburg state's prosecution of industrial total war. Unlike other belligerent states, the Habsburg Monarchy in peacetime introduced, debated, and passed legislation granting the Habsburg military establishment virtually total control over the workings of the Habsburg economy along with the right to control the movements and activities of the entire Monarchy's working classes. The nature and origins of this piece of legislation, then, have important repercussions for the course of the First World War, but also have much to reveal about late Imperial Austria. Though never considered a militarist state in the sense that the Wilhelmine Empire was militarist, Austria-Hungary nevertheless undertook a very rapid process of militarization in late 1912. This uniquely Habsburg process of militarization resulted in Austria-Hungary's entry into the First World War with a legal and military framework more suitable for the prosecution of industrial total war than any other combatant.

This chapter, then, seeks to explicate both how and why Austria-Hungary's process of militarization resulted in the military-bureaucratic regime established by the War Production Law of 1912. It will argue that two factors drove Austria-Hungary's militarization policies, namely a rapidly deteriorating international security situation posing an existential threat to the Habsburg state on the one hand and structural political and cultural factors constraining the extent and nature of possible responses to the external security challenges of the early 20th century. The Habsburg system's incapacity to initiate or sustain overt or immediate military measures did not extend to organizational and legal industrial mobilization measures, which postponed the real costs of military preparation until the outbreak of war and thus held out the possibility of maintaining the political and social status quo while also addressing the external security

situation. In this way, Austria-Hungary's initial industrial mobilization measures, intentionally or not, provided for the kind of total industrial mobilization which took place in the other belligerent powers only after the first years of war, which Mark Cornwall termed secondary industrial mobilization.²³⁹

Further, though, the nature of the legislative debate over this War Production Law provides insight into the Habsburg state and its relationship with its citizens in the late Imperial era. As Michael Geyer pointed out, the process of mobilization was undertaken throughout Europe in a manner which aimed at maintaining “pre-war social and power relations.”²⁴⁰ This conservative impulse guided the way in which the War Production Law was produced, debated, and accepted into law. The way in which Austria-Hungary underwent militarization in 1912, then, offers a window into the social and power relations extant in the pre-war Habsburg state. This debate demonstrates that the Habsburg government and its supporters in the *Reichsrat* saw the Monarchy as an authoritarian and paternal state to which the inhabitants owed their first and last allegiance, though the extent to which they would be called upon to deliver their rights and property for the defence of the state depended heavily on their social and political power. In this way, the War Production Law reinscribed Habsburg power relationships in the course of seeking a solution to the Habsburg security dilemma.

²³⁹This secondary mobilization was typically initiated by shell shortages and characterized by large-scale state intervention in strategic industries. Mark Cornwall, "Morale and Patriotism in the Austro-Hungarian Army, 1914-1918," in *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, ed. John Horne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²⁴⁰Michael Geyer, "The Militarization of Europe, 1914-1945," in: John R. Gillis, ed. *The Militarization of the Western World* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989) 81.

Panslavism and Encirclement: Existential Threat and Mobilization Policy

Narratives of Habsburg decline were ubiquitous leading up to the First World War, and have remained popular in historical writing ever since the Habsburg collapse in 1918. The foundations for the Monarchy's perceived decline were several. Perhaps the most often cited are the Monarchy's structural weaknesses, such as "the complex dualistic construction of the many-peopled realm, which...through the nationality question created such problems connected with alliance and even with personal questions."²⁴¹ Maintaining the complex balance of ethnicities in Austria-Hungary was a virtually impossible task. Trying to keep Czechs, Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenes, Croats, Italians, Serbs, and Romanians both happy with domestic policy and away from external states with their revanchist interests in annexing their co-nationals never fully worked. These domestic cleavages made it difficult if not impossible to mobilize the internal strength of the Austro-Hungarian state for any purpose.

The Monarchy was also falling behind in military power. The 1911 defence budget for the Dual Monarchy as a whole, for instance, was a mere 420 million crowns, while that of its most likely opponent, the Russian Empire, was four times as much at 1650 million crowns and the Monarchy's unfaithful friend, Italy, spent 528 million crowns.²⁴² This military weakness emerged more from the institutional limitations of the Habsburg political system than from the lack of latent or potential economic and demographic strength. As F.R. Bridge pointed out, "The eternal parsimony of the Austrian and Hungarian governments and their parliaments was an important cause of the weakness of the military forces...by 1913 Franz Joseph's subjects were spending more than three times as much money on beer, wine and tobacco than on the entire

²⁴¹Ibid.

²⁴²Gunther Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette, Purdue University Press, 1976) 160.

armed forces of the Dual Monarchy.”²⁴³ It may have been, as Croat representative Dr. Stojan put it, “sweet to die for one's fatherland,” but paying higher taxes for it was slightly more bitter.²⁴⁴

Dualism was chiefly at fault – the Hungarians demanded military and linguistic concessions to Magyars in the Imperial and Royal Army as the price for their assent to any military expansion, using their constitutionally required consent to the joint Imperial and Royal military budget as political leverage in their scorched-earth campaigns for complete autonomy.²⁴⁵ The Imperial House, led by Franz Ferdinand, bitterly opposed concessions to the Hungarians, seeking to retain as much unity as possible in their fractious dominions, and thus the result was typically deadlock.²⁴⁶

The Monarchy's international standing was similarly at an almost all-time low. Foreign Minister Alois von Aehrenthal's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 had managed to insult Russia, annoy Germany, and enrage Serbia, and thus "the immediate consequence of the annexation of Bosnia was the disgrace and isolation of Austria-Hungary."²⁴⁷ Though relations with the German Empire were patched up by virtue of the Germans' own isolation, Russian enmity was assured.²⁴⁸

The Habsburg position in Europe was threatened more strongly by the outbreak of the

²⁴³F.R. Bridge, *From Sadowa to Sarajevo: The Foreign Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1866-1914* (Boston: Routledge, 1972) 23.

²⁴⁴*Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrates im Jahre 1912, XXI. Session, V. Band.* (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1913). 21. Session, 128. Sitzung, 14th Dec. 1912. 6251. *Dulce est, pro patria mori.*

²⁴⁵Paul Lendvai, *The Hungarians: A Thousand Years of Victory in Defeat*, Ann Major, Trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) 285.

²⁴⁶Rothenberg, 160.

²⁴⁷F.R. Bridge, *The Habsburg Monarchy Among the Great Powers, 1815-1918* (New York: Berg, 1990) 288.

²⁴⁸Aehrenthal had originally promised the Russian foreign minister compensation in the form of support for the opening of the straits to Russian warships, but in actuality declared the annexation unilaterally. See Kenneth Dailey, “Alexander Isvolsky and the Buchlau Conference,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Jan., 1951), 55-63.

First Balkan War, on the 8th of October, 1912, than by any event since the Napoleonic Wars. The various Balkan states, namely Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro, declared war on the Ottoman Empire in an attempt to conquer the remainder of its European possessions. The Habsburg Monarchy, along with other European powers, notably France, unsuccessfully sought to prevent the outbreak of war as a destabilizing threat to the peace of Europe, but the weakness of the Habsburg position was apparent to everyone, and most of all to the Austro-Hungarians themselves. In the opening stages of the war, the Army Inspector in Sarajevo, Potiorek, pleaded for more troops to support his 10-12,000 men against the Serbian and Montenegrin armies, 230,000 strong.²⁴⁹ Emperor Franz Josef considered the situation the most dire for the Monarchy since 1866, and war nearly broke out several times, against both Serbia and Russia.²⁵⁰ Russia in particular was seen as engineering an encirclement of Austria-Hungary meant to provoke war, dismembering the Monarchy in order to achieve a final victory for pan-Slavist ideology.²⁵¹

Austria-Hungary undertook a variety of military precautions in order to prepare for the possibility of Habsburg intervention in the Balkans or Russian intervention against the Habsburgs. The Imperial and Royal War Minister, Count Auffenberg, explained on the 14th of September that there "there was no question of any direct military intervention...the treasury was empty and the army...was by no means prepared for action."²⁵² Immediate rectification of Habsburg weakness was then necessary in order to head off war or to have some chance of success in case of its outbreak. Garrisons in Bosnia-Herzegovina were reinforced up to war strength, and in response to Russian partial mobilization in its western military districts the

²⁴⁹David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 254.

²⁵⁰Ibid., 257-9.

²⁵¹[untitled editorial], *Pester Lloyd*, 24th November 1912. *Morgenblatt*.

²⁵²Bridge, *The Habsburg Monarchy*, 316.

Habsburg I, X, and XI Corps were mobilized in full while the IV, VII, and XIII Corps were partially mobilized.²⁵³ The Delegations, on the 29th of October, voted 250 million crowns, over half of the previous year's military budget, to defray extraordinary military expenditures, a sum which barely covered requirements.²⁵⁴ A general war was barely averted when the Russian Czar cancelled the proposed mobilization of the Warsaw and Kiev military districts. The beginning of December, though, saw an upswing in Habsburg military preparations against Serbia, and the XV and XVI Corps were mobilized.²⁵⁵ By the end of 1912 over 200,000 men had been mobilized on the Monarchy's borders.²⁵⁶

The implications of the First Balkan War for the Monarchy were tremendous. The 1904 coup in Serbia, in which the pro-Habsburg Obrenovic dynasty had been brutally overthrown and replaced with the anti-Habsburg and pro-Russian Karadjordjevic dynasty had converted Serbia into one of the most dangerous irredentas for the Monarchy in the Balkans.²⁵⁷ The First Balkan War, and especially the success of Serbian arms against the Turks, demonstrated that the Balkans were no longer Austria-Hungary's colonial sphere. Balkan states were now equipped with large and experienced armies, equipped with new weapons purchased from Russian, French, and even Austrian and German weapons manufactories, and their ties to Russia were becoming stronger. In late October, the then-Chief of the Habsburg General Staff, Baron von Schemua, compared the extraordinary and unexpected accomplishments of the mobilizations of the Balkan States to that

²⁵³Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*. 166-7.

²⁵⁴Ibid., 167.

²⁵⁵Ibid.

²⁵⁶Stevenson, 259.

²⁵⁷Barbara Jelavich, *The Habsburg Empire in European Affairs, 1814-1918* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969) 148.

of a “new Great Power on the southern flank.”²⁵⁸ Austria-Hungary was isolated and encircled, with Russia forming a Balkan League around Serbia, Romania defecting to the Entente, and the Young Turks alienated by von Aehrenthal's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁵⁹ The feelings of weakness and decline which wracked the Habsburg leadership, then, were well justified.

²⁵⁸Stevenson, 256.

²⁵⁹Paul Schroeder, “World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak,” *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Sep., 1972) 337.

War Parties and War Politics: The Introduction of the War Production Law

There was thus a considerable amount of pressure to undertake measures aimed at restoring the Monarchy's ability to guarantee its own security and interests in the Balkans. It was in this milieu of war fever and war danger, of Russian mobilizations and Habsburg countermobilizations, of Albanian insurrection and Ottoman collapse, that the War Production Law was introduced. The War Production Law served as the capstone and most important element of a series of legislative reforms of the Habsburg military apparatus.

Even before the First Balkan War broke out, a series of long-overdue legislative acts had sought to streamline and rationalize the Habsburg military. The Austrian *Reichsrat*, in the summer of 1912, passed a new Army Law and a new Code of Military Justice. The new Army Law of July 5th, 1912, increased the annual contingent of recruits conscripted for the Common Army by 136,000 men, for the *Landwehr* for 20,715 men, and for the *Honvédseg* by 17,500, but in exchange the Hungarians extracted concessions reducing the service obligation from three years to two and allowed the *Honvédseg* to include artillery in its organization.²⁶⁰ It also created a new category of labor obligation for conscripts. Article Seven decreed that “those who are not suited to actual combat duty but are suited to serving in a related capacity can be conscripted for such service in case of mobilization or a state of war.”²⁶¹ Those liable to service were any males of conscription age, which at the outbreak of the First World War was defined as age twenty-one until age thirty-three.²⁶² These conscripts, though, were not civilian laborers but instead soldiers,

²⁶⁰Rothenberg, 165. The Habsburg Military was divided into three main components, of which the Imperial and Royal Army was the most important element. Both Austria and Hungary both had their own military structures, the Austrian *Landwehr* and the Hungarian *Honvédseg*, though they functioned chiefly as a militia and reservist organization.

²⁶¹*Reichsgesetzblatt für die im Reichsrath vertretenen Königreiche und Länder* (Vienna: Kaiserl.-königl. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1912). LIV. Stück, Nr. 128. 412.

²⁶²Hans Loewenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (Vienna, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 39, 43.

so it represented less of a radical break with previous practices than the War Production Law.

With the collapse of the Habsburg position in Southeast Europe daily visible on the front pages of the Monarchy's newspapers, the legislative environment became more hospitable to military measures going beyond organizational issues. The Austrian *Reichsrat* itself was composed by the surprise election of June 1911, forced by the withdrawal of the Polish Club from Bienerth's government. These elections were a resounding success for the Habsburg government, as government parties won resoundingly everywhere except Vienna, where Schönerer's German Radicals and the Social Democrats managed to defeat the leaderless Christian Socials.²⁶³ Count Karl Stürgkh, Austrian Minister-President, “worked with a more subtle combination of parties drawn from almost all the different nationalities,” and thus it is somewhat more difficult to establish the how overwhelming the government's working majority in the *Reichsrat* was.²⁶⁴ The main government opposition, though, especially in matters concerned with the security of the state, was the Social Democrats and in the 1911-1914 *Reichsrat* there were only 82 Social Democratic votes. Various other minor parties, such as the Croatian Pure Party of Right or the Young Czechs, were very unlikely to vote with the government but their small representation meant that they could be safely treated as negligible.²⁶⁵

The Hungarian *Reichsrat* was much simpler to understand – there was Prime Minister István Tisza's National Party of Work, and then there was everyone else. The 'united opposition' was not even physically present for the parliamentary sessions under discussion. Having been physically barred from the building, the parliament sessions gave them “the opportunity to hold a

²⁶³Lothar Höbelt, “‘Well-tempered Discontent’: Austrian Domestic Politics,” in *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary*, ed. Mark Cornwall (Exeter: Short Run Press Ltd., 2002) 62.

²⁶⁴Ibid.

²⁶⁵Ibid., 58.

small demonstration in front of the police cordon...where Police Inspector Beniczyn politely informed them that those representatives excluded from the session must decline [*verweigern*] entrance.”²⁶⁶

The government draft of the War Production Law was written in haste by a committee under the auspices of the Ministry of National Defence [*Landesverteidigungsministerium*] and chaired by its Minister, Friedrich Freiherr von Georgi. It was also heavily influenced by the War Ministry and took into account input from a wide variety of different ministries.²⁶⁷ When Austrian Minister-President Count Stürgkh ascended to the podium, at one o'clock in the afternoon on the 28th of November, the crowd of reporters expected only a statement on the Ruthenian and Croatia obstruction that had slowed parliamentary business to a halt. In addition to pledging to not resort to extreme measures to break the obstruction, though, Stürgkh also announced that “the government intends to introduce three bills as soon as possible, on the quickest possible execution of which the government lays the greatest importance.”²⁶⁸ These three bills, he went on, pertained respectively to the welfare of the families of reservists called to service, the acquisition of horses for military purposes, and to the provision of quarters [*Ubikationen*] for mobilized troops.²⁶⁹ Without access to his personal correspondence it is impossible to say for certain whether Stürgkh was intentionally misrepresenting the provisions of the War Production Law, though it is likely he was. Though the law certainly in some sense had to do with the provision of living space to mobilized troops, his description was deceptive. His intent was likely to shortcut consideration – he went on to request that the various party

²⁶⁶“Aus dem Reichstage,” *Pester Lloyd*, 27th November, 1912. Abendblatt.

²⁶⁷“Die Militärvorlagen im österreichischen Abgeordnetenhaus,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, 3rd December 1912.

²⁶⁸“Wichtige Erläuterungen des Grafen Stürgkh,” *Pester Lloyd*, 28th November, 1912. Abendblatt.

²⁶⁹*Ibid.*

leaders to come to an agreement on the smooth progress of these bills that very day. The Social Democrats immediately gave voice to their intent to hinder the immediate direction of the bills to their respective committees without a plenary debate.²⁷⁰

The *Pester Lloyd's* parliamentary correspondent incorrectly postulated that the War Production Law draft would not be introduced into the Austrian *Reichsrat*, since in his estimation the appropriate authority as enumerated in the draft already existed under Austrian Law.²⁷¹ In his assessment, the War Production Law draft was largely innocuous, and affected only measures necessary for the successful mobilization of the army. He further argued, as the Habsburg government later would, that it constituted merely a “filling up of a hole in our law code, as the executive power in extraordinary cases dispenses with every legality, in order to itself be able to energetically combat domestic unrest.”²⁷² The War Production Law would be presented to the Hungarian *Reichsrat* on the next day, Saturday, by the *Honvédseg* Minister, Baron Hazai.²⁷³

In Austro-Hungarian parliamentary practice, bills were drafted by the Habsburg ministers as representatives of the Emperor's executive power, and then submitted to the *Reichsrat* for consideration. In principle, it would then be subject to a first reading during plenary debate before being voted on by a plenum in order to refer the bill to the appropriate committee for consideration. The committee then debates, amends, and votes on the bill to refer it back to the plenary body for final debate. The final debate offers the opportunity for amendment, which is then followed by the second reading of the bill and the final vote. If successful, the Emperor then

²⁷⁰Ibid.

²⁷¹“Wichtige Ausnahmeverlagen,” *Pester Lloyd*, 29th November 1912. *Morgenblatt*. The basis for this argument was apparently the requirement that insofar as possible measures which affected the joint institutions of the Monarchy be in force in both halves of the Monarchy.

²⁷²Ibid.

²⁷³Ibid.

signs the bill into law. At this stage, then, the War Production Law was submitted to the Austrian *Reichsrat* for a first reading on Friday, the 29th of November, and to the Hungarian *Reichsrat* on the 30th of November.²⁷⁴ The Austrian chamber, complying with Stürgkh's wishes, dispensed with a first reading of the bill. When submitted to the *Reichsrat*, though, the Ministry misrepresented the content of the bill, saying that the bill concerned only “certain personal services” rather than, as parliamentarian Dr. Hübschmann put it during the debate, a radical expansion of “the duties of the inhabitants of the State with respect to the military.”²⁷⁵ As a consequence of the misrepresentation of the contents of the bill, the draft was routed to the Justice Committee for consideration before the plenary debate instead of to the Army Committee, where it was duly taken up for consideration. The Justice Committee, though, was not to meet until the 3rd of December.²⁷⁶ The Hungarian bill was immediately and without fanfare forwarded to their Justice Committee for consideration, after the chamber unanimously consented to dispense with a first reading.²⁷⁷ The Hungarian Justice Committee took up the government's draft of the War Production Law on the 3rd of December. After Representative Gabriel Vargha announced that the government had assured him it would use the powers contained in the law “only in the most extreme emergency,” the bill was unanimously voted out of the committee unchanged.²⁷⁸ It was then passed unchanged by the plenum in a special debate session, to be signed into law.

Even before the Austrian Justice Committee took up the draft for consideration, though,

²⁷⁴“Die Ausnahmeverordnungen,” *Pester Lloyd*, 29th November, 1912. Abendblatt.

²⁷⁵*Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrates im Jahre 1912, XXI. Session, V. Band.* (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1913). 129th Sitzung, 17th - 19th December, 1912. 6275.

²⁷⁶“Oesterreichischer Reichsrat,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, 3rd December 1912.

²⁷⁷“Aus dem Reichstage,” *Pester Lloyd*, 30th November, 1912. Abendblatt.

²⁷⁸“Aus den Ausschüssen,” *Pester Lloyd*, 3rd December, 1912. Morgenblatt.

the draft “met with protest among the parties, which has been voiced as early as Friday.”²⁷⁹ The *Neue Freie Presse* parliamentary correspondent was further of the opinion that “the harshness of the War Production Law will be perpetually discussed, and that it shall be pointed out that this draft, owing to the brevity of the process by which it was completed, represents no thoroughly considered and fully ripened work of legislation...”²⁸⁰ It did, however, read like an authoritarian wish list.

The initial draft of the War Production Law contained far-reaching provisions for sweeping military powers to be exercised over the entire civilian economy, provisions unique in pre-war Europe. The first article, in which the basis for the declaration of service obligations under the War Production Law was set out, limited the use of obligatory labor to those situations wherein the normal peacetime methods of acquiring goods and labor were unavailable or only to be acquired “with unreasonably large expenditure.”²⁸¹ No other restrictions were placed on the annunciation of labor obligations either temporally or substantively, which is to say that the War Production Law could in theory have been invoked in order to lower government expenditures in the normal run of peacetime events.

Article Two placed the authority to declare the War Production Law in effect in the hands of the Minister for National Defence, while Article Three limited demands under the War Production Law to crucial needs, which could only be placed on those capable of providing service and which would receive an “appropriate compensation”.²⁸² Articles Four and Eighteen

²⁷⁹“Die militärischen Vorlagen: Voraussichtliche Aufforderung zur raschen Erledigung,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, December 3rd, 1912. The 3rd of December, 1912 was a Tuesday.

²⁸⁰“Oesterreichischer Reichsrat,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, 3rd December 1912.

²⁸¹*Beilagen zu den Stenographischen Protokollen des Hauses der Abgeordneten des österreichischen Reichsrates im Jahre 1912. XXI. Session, IX. Band.* (Vienna: k.k. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1913). Beilage 1730. “Regierungsvorlage.” 1.

²⁸²*Ibid.*

provided the heart and soul of the bill. Article Four established a liability to personal labor obligation on the part of “all work-capable male civil persons who have not yet reached the fiftieth year of age.”²⁸³ Article Eighteen extended to the state the ability to seize industrial or factory plants and operations, along with their labor forces, and to compel their continued operation.²⁸⁴

In view of this article, Article Six, which declared that laborers under the War Production Law were “obligated to remain in their previous service or labor relationship for the duration of the utilization of the concern (*Unternehmen*), until the collective or personal obligation to war service ends...,” represented at least the potential for a radical system of labor coercion, as entire factories or even industries could be seized under this article and their labor forces compelled to remain at their posts.²⁸⁵ To further express the subordination of these workers, article nine decreed that civilians under the War Production Law “for the duration of their service...are subordinated to military justice and military discipline.”²⁸⁶ In this conception of labor service such unremarkable events such as changing jobs or absenteeism were to be interpreted through a framework of military discipline, and could thus be treated as abandoning one's post in wartime. Strikes at factories seized under the War Production Law were even more dangerous – such was the stuff of mutiny.

²⁸³Ibid.

²⁸⁴Ibid.

²⁸⁵Ibid.

²⁸⁶Ibid.

A New Sight Under the Heavens: Comparative Industrial Mobilization Measures

One of the key governmental justifications in defense of von Georgi's draft was that it drew heavily from previous measures enacted in civilized Europe. The government claimed that the War Production Law “leaned heavily on the German Imperial Law regarding War Service.”²⁸⁷ The three main legal norms contained in the Imperial German law were that the populace of the state were liable to provide goods and service to accommodate the effective prosecution of the war insofar as such prosecution could not be satisfied in other ways, that the burden of such provision ought be placed on the community as a whole, and that suitable compensation in the form of scrip was necessary.²⁸⁸

Unlike the Austro-Hungarian War Production Law, though, the Wilhelmine Imperial Law Regarding War Service concerned itself exclusively with mobilization measures. While some of the legislative language in the War Production Law is reminiscent of Wilhelmine measures – notably the first two articles regulating the duration of the applicability of the law and the notionally exceptional nature of the measures therein – the natures of the two laws were very different.²⁸⁹ The Wilhelmine law concerned itself with *acquisition* rather than production. It enabled the military to seize fodder, food, living quarters, transport, land, fuel, and even weapons and medical supplies.²⁹⁰ What it did *not* do was enable the conscription and coercion of industrial labor. Clause 3 of Article 3 did provide for the provision of “that manpower available in the community for service as river pilots, guides, messengers, as well as for road, railroad, and

²⁸⁷*Beilagen*, Beilage 1768 B, “Erläuterungen und Begründungen zum Entwurfe des Gesetzes, betreffend die Kriegsleistungen.” 18.

²⁸⁸*Ibid.*

²⁸⁹Germany. *Reichs-Gesetzblatt* (Berlin: 1873) 129-137. §1, 2.

²⁹⁰*Ibid.* §3.

bridge construction, fortification construction, and provision of river and harbor obstacles.”²⁹¹

Nowhere, though, did this law enable intervention in the civilian economy beyond the actual path of marching armies, nor was it meant to. The Habsburg citation of the Wilhelmine law as the basis of the War Production Law functioned only to camouflage the extremism of the War Production Law.

The legal basis for Imperial German economic mobilization and organization in wartime was actually legislated in the 1851 Prussian Law of Siege, which under the Imperial Constitution became law for the entirety of Germany in 1871.²⁹² This law was utterly obsolete. Intended to provide for order and security in cities or small regions actually under interdiction from hostile forces, the majority of its provisions detail crimes, punishments, and military court proceedings.²⁹³ In order to come into effect, it was “by drum roll or trumpet call to be announced.”²⁹⁴ The relevant provision in the bill was Article 4, which ordered that “with the annunciation of the state of siege the entire power is transferred to the military commander. The civil administration and community offices are obligated to obey the military commander.”²⁹⁵

Though originally meant to address a limited and specific context, this law was used to vastly extend the authority of the German military at the outbreak of the First World War. In the 24 army districts of the Wilhelmine Empire, “the Deputy Commanding Generals...were given virtually dictatorial power in their respective districts. Acting as agents of the Emperor and

²⁹¹Ibid.

²⁹²Herman Gerlach James, *Principles of Prussian Administration* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1913) 238.

²⁹³Ernst Huber, ed. *Dokumente zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte*, Bd. I (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1961) 415-419. Article 11, for example, specifies that the military court shall consist of five people, two of which were to be civilian judicial officials.

²⁹⁴Ibid. 415. §3.

²⁹⁵Ibid. 416. §4.

responsible to him alone, they were assigned the task of maintaining the 'public safety' in their areas of command.”²⁹⁶ Though these Deputy Generals were granted very wide powers, “the procurement of men, munitions, weapons, and other supplies for the field army were the sole responsibility of the Prussian War Ministry,” and the Deputy Generals were not answerable to the Prussian War Ministry.²⁹⁷ Chaos, then, was the result of German worship of the military. The Wilhelmine system of industrial mobilization for the First World War proceeded on an *ad hoc* basis in each of the twenty-four military districts, and it was not until the Auxiliary Service Law of December 5th, 1916 that the German *Reich* gained the legal powers over labor and industrial production contained in the War Production Law.²⁹⁸

The other great powers had their own peculiar systems of armaments production, and like Germany and Austria-Hungary, their internal political and social structure played an important role in their war preparations. Imperial Russia, for example, entered the war without any fixed plan for industrial mobilization. Indeed, political conflict and administrative inefficiency prevented the Russian War Ministry from drawing on the full weight of Russian industrial capacity until 1916, preferring to rely instead on foreign orders.²⁹⁹ This *ad hoc* industrial mobilization was primarily exercised through the accustomed methods of the pre-war era, which is to say the state placing orders primarily with the state-owned firms which constituted the vast majority of Russian armaments manufacturing.³⁰⁰

Republican France had similarly undertaken no formal preparations for the mobilization

²⁹⁶Gerald Feldman, *Army, Industry, and Labor in Germany, 1914-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966) 31.

²⁹⁷*Ibid.*, 33.

²⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 247-249.

²⁹⁹Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975) 13.

³⁰⁰Stevenson, 34-35.

of French industry in case of war, and indeed no one in the government had given the matter much thought.³⁰¹ This oversight left provisioning the army in the hands of private industry free from government influence or intervention until 1915. The French Chamber of Deputies did pass a law granting the government the power to requisition industrial production in August of 1914, amending a previous law of 1877, but this power remained a potential threat rather than an operating principle.³⁰² Great Britain's Defence of the Realm Act, of the 27th of November, 1914, decreed it lawful for the Army Council "to take possession of and use for the purpose of His Majesty's naval or military service any such factory or workshop or any plant [manufacturing war materials]," but this act neither foresaw any measures intervening in labor organization or coercion, nor appeared before the outbreak of the war.³⁰³

Italian industrial mobilization measures were perhaps the most comparable to those of Austria-Hungary. Two decrees, in June and August 1915, established an industrial mobilization office headed by General Alfredo Dallolio which operated along military-bureaucratic lines. Unlike the British or French examples, Dallolio's office was established more or less explicitly to impose coercive discipline on industrial labor.³⁰⁴ Like Austria-Hungary, Italy's focus on labor discipline reflected hostility to social democracy and partiality towards the maintenance of an aristocratic-corporatist political and economic system.³⁰⁵ These measures in Italy only came, though, after the first year of war, and thus took advantage of the hard-won experience of the

³⁰¹John Godfrey, *Capitalism at War: Industrial Policy and Bureaucracy in France, 1914-1918* (New York: Berg, 1987) 4.

³⁰²*Ibid.*, 45.

³⁰³"Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, 1914." MUN 5/19/221/8 (Nov 1914); http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/first_world_war/p_defence.htm

³⁰⁴Luigi Tomassini, Catherine Frost, "Industrial Mobilization and the Labour Market in Italy during the First World War" *Social History*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1991) 59-62.

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 62.

other belligerents. In 1912, then, the Austro-Hungarian War Production Law, far from being an unremarkable implementation of international legislative norms, was a unique and radical intervention into the entire economic sphere of the state. Though certainly reminiscent of the secondary industrial labor mobilization eventually undertaken by all major belligerents, this law was passed into law without the goad of the First World War.

Legislative Militarization: The *Reichsrat* Debate

The initial hurdle faced by the draft War Production Law was to be reported out of the Justice Committee to the plenary chamber. It was to the Justice Committee that the government presented its rationale for the provisions and necessity of the law, and thus the Committee debate offers the opportunity to examine the government view of the responsibilities and duties of the state to its citizens and of the citizens toward the state. Implicit in the state understanding of 'citizen' treated here, though, is subordination, as the only body of people actually subject to its provisions were the laboring and parts of the peasant population.

The government's initial defense for the introduction of the law followed a somewhat unusual course. The report began by arguing that “[i]t is a fact grounded in ethical feeling that the inhabitants of a state concerned with its defence have the natural consciousness of the immanence of their obligation to place their property and their blood at the service of the same in case of a threat of war.”³⁰⁶ The typical course of such a process, it continued, was to stand in defense of the state with weapon in hand, but labor service was a perfectly respectable and necessary way to render service to one's fatherland in time of war. This was not only a one-way relationship, though – the existence of the obligation of the individual to the state created a reciprocal relationship. The report recognized this, arguing “in this relationship [between the laboring citizen and the state], the state is obligated to take care that the willingness to sacrifice on the part of the population is taken into account only in so far as such willingness is within the bounds of what it is possible for them to achieve [*Leistungsfähigkeit*].”³⁰⁷ This reciprocal conception of labor obligation to the state and state concern for the demands placed on the citizens of the state represented the only real limitation on the state's power to arbitrarily control

³⁰⁶*Beilagen*, Beilage 1768 B., 9.

³⁰⁷*Ibid.*

labor, but in the report justifying the bill as well as in the bill itself the only real concession to the citizen was that “the services provided will be compensated with public means according to the principles of equitability.”³⁰⁸ Exactly what that would mean in practice was left entirely up to the government officials in charge of implementing the labor compensation process envisioned under Article Three.

The War Production Law was further made necessary, according to the government, by the arrival of a new kind of warfare. Mass warfare required mass labor mobilization, as troop mobilization brought with it the necessity for producing, acquiring, and transporting immense quantities of material. Due to this new necessity, the government argued, the wartime labor obligations which have been understood to be the responsibility of the citizens of the belligerent states since time immemorial required a legislative basis - “to regulate these state concerns in a legislative way is the intention of the presented draft.”³⁰⁹

Counter-intuitively, then, the government argument was that the War Production Law was actually in the best interests of the Austro-Hungarian laboring classes, as acknowledging and regulating their pre-existing 'natural' labor obligations to the state would allow the population to prepare for undertaking their duties before the outbreak of a war, as well as spreading the burden across the entire population instead of concentrating it on those who happen to be near the war zone on an *ad hoc* basis during the war.³¹⁰ The final plank of the government defense of the War Production Law was the assertion that other nations had also undertaken similar legislation, which assertion has already been treated.

³⁰⁸Ibid.

³⁰⁹Ibid. It is somewhat surprising, in light of later developments, that this line of argumentation received so little attention or concern.

³¹⁰Ibid.

The Justice Committee seated a government majority, with a German party politician, Dr. Stölzel, as position representative (*Berichterstatter*). Dr. Stölzel's defense of the bill offers a valuable perspective into the essentially statist and authoritarian perspective which the government majority took towards the War Production Law. His position was that the War Production Law was fundamentally unnecessary, since the state by virtue of emergency necessity could already seize any assets it wished to and compel any kind of service from its citizens. Citing Treitschke as an “acknowledged authority on such matters,” Stölzel argued along with the government that the citizens of the state were obligated to put their “possessions and belongings [*Hab und Gut*]” at the disposal of the state.³¹¹ War, especially, in Stölzel's view, was an extraordinary state in which the typical ways of doing things no longer held. His metaphor was that of disaster, and he emphasized this view by saying, “[s]uch provision of service...should not be demanded of the populace when a great fire breaks out, when the state becomes embroiled in war?”³¹²

It was important for passage that the unprecedented and extremist nature of the War Production Law be minimized, and Dr. Stölzel was happy to oblige. In order to do this, he used two lines of argument. First, that the draft was not “a new thing in the cultured world (*Kulturwelt*),” but was instead foreshadowed by similar legislation in Germany, France, and Italy, passed in the 1870's.³¹³ Second, that international law gave an occupying power on enemy territory all of the rights which the War Production Law would grant to the Habsburg government over its own territory, and that it was therefore self-evidently absurd to tie the

³¹¹*Beilagen*, Beilage 1768 A. “Einleitender Bericht des Berichterstatters Dr. Stölzel in der Sitzung des Justizausschusses von 3. Dezember 1912.” 1.

³¹²*Ibid.*, 2.

³¹³*Ibid.* As previously noted, this was not actually the case.

government's hands in defending the state against an external enemy.³¹⁴ This argument is revealing of the dynamic at work. The symbolic move being undertaken here represents the Habsburg government as an occupying power *vis-a-vis* Habsburg industrial labor, and implicitly justifies coercive labor discipline by identifying Habsburg labor with an internal enemy.

Against the specter of forced labor under Article Six of the War Production Law, Stölzel launched a broadside against his critics. When they spoke of personal freedom, he regarded it as an attack on the Austrian State, as “the enemy power will not concern itself with your freedoms”.³¹⁵ Further, rather than being directed against freedom, Article Six was directed against traitors trying to bring down the army and the state, namely the industrial proletariat. It was meant, he said, “for the case of the appearance of those traitors to their fatherland who ought work in the factory and could hinder the provision of timely goods to the army.”³¹⁶ Better to have war-time labor subordination legislated, he claimed, than to have the government be forced to coerce labor in an *ad hoc* way. He went on to deny that the bill was unconstitutional.³¹⁷

The government had also gone to pains to underscore the constitutionality of the law, and had called upon the noted Austrian constitutional scholar Heinrich Lammash, then sitting in the upper chamber of the legislature and later to preside over the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918, to provide a rescript testifying to the constitutionality of the law. Articles Four and Six of the Austro-Hungarian Constitution held that “the mobility of labor and of property within the borders of the state shall not be liable to restriction” and that “[e]very citizen can make his dwelling and domicile at any place in the territory of the state, acquire property of

³¹⁴Ibid., 3.

³¹⁵Ibid., 4.

³¹⁶Ibid.

³¹⁷Ibid.

every kind, and dispose of it as desired as well as exercise every right of inheritance consistent with legal restrictions.”³¹⁸ It would naturally seem that nationalization of property, forced labor, and cancellation of the right to labor mobility would contradict these clauses, but Lammasch's report held that the War Production Law was not in fact in violation of the constitution, as the Austrian Constitution itself allowed for the suspension of its provisions in times of emergency, such as in a time of war, under Article Twenty.³¹⁹ Thus reassured, the government majority on the Justice Committee proceeded to steamroll the minority and pass the draft on to the plenary session.

The minority position, spearheaded by the German Social Democrats Drs. Renner and Hübschmann and the Polish Social Democrat Dr. Liebermann, was not totally ignored, but in the final calculation their intervention was not decisive in changing the text of the draft. They did succeed in inserting three changes into the text, two major and one minor. The most important alteration came in Article One, where the phrase “for the duration of a threatening or actual war” was inserted after the first clause.³²⁰ This change shifted the necessary condition for the War Production Law to come into effect from a simple state of mobilization, such as was actually in effect over large areas of the Habsburg Monarchy during the debate, to that of an imminent danger of war or a declared war. This in essence prevented the War Production Law from coming into effect in peacetime in order to circumvent restrictions on strike breaking or to simply allow the government to supply the military more cheaply. This was not a minor concession. As Opposing Speaker (*Kontraredner*) Hanusch was later to argue in the plenary session, without

³¹⁸*Reichs-Gesetzblatt für das Kaiserthum Österreich* (Vienna: Kaiserl.-königl. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1867). LXI. Stück, Nr. 142. 395-96.

³¹⁹*Beilagen*, Beilage 1768 C. “Gutachten des Universitätsprofessors Hofrat Dr. Lammasch betreffend des Kriegsleistungsgesetz.” 25.

³²⁰*Beilagen*, Beilage 1768. “Gesetzentwurf.” 7.

revision in the first Article the War Production Law could never have been capable of becoming law - “such would be a military dictatorship in peacetime.”³²¹ Of course the law as accepted represented a military dictatorship in time of war, but such was at least slightly less odious than in peacetime. Whether he was correct in his argument that this revision was necessary for passage or not is difficult to establish.

The second major concession which Renner wrung out of the Justice Committee was an alteration of Article Four, on personal labor liability, adding the phrase “only outside of the line of fire” to the end of the first clause regulating service, thus limiting labor obligation to behind the front line.³²² In so doing, the Social Democrats not only assuaged fears that the War Production Law would create a sort of shadow *franc-tireur* organization in contravention to the laws of war but also secured a considerably more compelling guarantee against War Production Law laborers being captured or killed by belligerent foreign armies. The final concession was also in the fourth Article, declaring that younger persons were to be conscripted for labor purposes before older persons if at all possible, which, while certainly an improvement, played little part in the core of the bill.³²³

These changes were, however, only accepted because they were acceptable to the government, and a whole series of minority motions were dismissed out of hand as unacceptable. Among these were a motion from Drs. Diner, Renner, and Liebermann to prohibit allied states from making direct demands on the Habsburg population as Article One would allow.³²⁴ Drs. Witt, Liebermann, and Renner moved to change Article Two to require the entire ministerial

³²¹*Stenographische Protokolle*, 129th Sitzung der XXI. Session, 6390.

³²²*Beilagen*, Beilage 1768. “Gesetzentwurf.” 8.

³²³*Ibid.*

³²⁴*Ibid.*, 25.

cabinet to agree in order to bring the War Production Law into effect.³²⁵ Drs. Hübschmann, Witt, and Bukvaj moved that the government be required to account for its use of the War Production Law to the *Reichsrat* at the end of the period of its effectiveness.³²⁶ Drs. Dnistrianskij, Okunowsky, and Liebermann moved to amend Article Three to guarantee that “the minimum necessary for existence shall not be called into question” for the laborers.³²⁷ All failed, foundering on government opposition.

The Justice Committee Report to the plenary session, submitted on the 14th of December, 1912, took the government position more or less entirely.³²⁸ The core of the report was the Committee's conclusion that the War Production Law was the codification of previously existing emergency powers, and that the state had the right to mobilize the entire civil and economic potential of its citizens to defeat external or internal threats.³²⁹ The Committee further concluded that the draft's limitations on personal and property rights were legitimate in view of the emergency suspension clause (Article 20) in the Austro-Hungarian Constitution, and, covering all their bases, declared that in any case rights were a legal construct and thus certainly not inviolable.³³⁰

In defense of their rejection of the vast majority of the minority's motions, the report cited the government's argument that the War Production Law was a war measure affecting the entire realm and thus must be accepted as written in both halves of the Monarchy. As Hungary's rubber-

³²⁵Ibid., 26.

³²⁶Ibid., 27.

³²⁷Ibid.

³²⁸*Stenographische Protokolle*, 127th Sitzung der XXI. Session, 6237.

³²⁹*Beilagen*, Beilage 1768, “Justizausschuss Bericht.”

³³⁰Ibid. 2.

stamp parliament had already unanimously passed the bill in its original form, this argument then produced pressure to accept the measure without amendment in order to assure the unity of military administration in time of war. The Minister for National Defence, von Georgi, assured the Committee that the law would be carried out in a way which took their concerns into consideration, but strongly opposed attempts to tie the government's hands by actually changing the text of the law.³³¹ From the original submission of the bill through the Justice Committee session, then, the government remained committed to stampeding the War Production Law through the *Reichsrat* with a minimum of transparency and certainly with a minimum of alterations.

Substantively, the Justice Committee debate led to several important changes in the War Production Law, but the changes were preventative in character rather than fundamental. The core of the bill, which is to say the virtually unlimited personal and industrial labor obligations in service of the Habsburg military, remained unchanged. The government did accept limitations of this power to wartime, but it is unlikely that Emperor Franz Josef would have agreed to the sort of centralized military dictatorship which would have resulted from the application of this power in peacetime. His formative experiences of rule were shaped by the traumatic experiences of defeat and humiliation, against France and Sardinia in the 1859 Austro-Sardinian War and against Prussia in the 1866 Austro-Prussian War, both of which spelled the end of Habsburg protectorates first in Italy and then in Germany. As a result, his ideological orientation was towards stasis. Franz Josef, “having already lost much, deliberately avoided losing still more.”³³² More, his personality and style of rule militated against dramatic or aggressive policy

³³¹Ibid. 4.

³³²Samuel R. Williamson, *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 29.

manuevers. As one of his recent biographers argued, “his was a mind attuned to routine and rules, with an inborn distrust of experiment and improvisation which became more marked with age.”³³³ It is possible that the Habsburg army leadership had hoped to sneak a military dictatorship into Habsburg society through the back door, as the new army leadership, marked by Conrad von Hötzendorf’s gospel of national regeneration through aggression and supported by his political patron, Franz Ferdinand, had proceeded to push for a militarization of the Monarchy’s affairs along authoritarian lines ever since the turn of the century, as well as constantly demanding war in response to every crisis and setback in foreign affairs, primarily against Italy, Serbia, or frequently both.³³⁴ Any such attempt, though, would have foundered on Hungarian opposition in the Delegations and thus the addition of the clause prohibiting it cannot be considered a tremendous defeat for the government.

The plenary debate over the War Production Law began two weeks after the Justice Committee debate, due to delays and obstructionary tactics in the debate over the state budget. The *Reichsrat* was not functioning at peak efficiency, and indeed obstructionary tactics were calling the continued operation of the then-constituted body into question.³³⁵ The obstructionary parties, chiefly the Ruthenes and the Czech Radicals, were also part of the minority opposition opposing the War Production Law, but the chief opposition was the Social Democratic parties of Austria.

The plenary debate revolved around social democratic condemnations of the War Production Law as being anti-democratic and being aimed at destroying the industrial working

³³³John van der Kiste, *Emperor Francis Joseph. Life, Death and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire* (Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 2005) 92.

³³⁴Williamson, 49. For a more in-depth discussion of Conrad von Hötzendorf’s radical militarism, see Lawrence Sondhaus’ biography of him, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Brill, 2000).

³³⁵“Die Beratungen des Reichsrats,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, December 16th, 1912.

class in Austria, as intuition would suggest. The majority's response glossed over the anti-labor nature of the bill, regarding labor's rightful place as one of subordination, and resorted to appeals to patriotism and invocations of the specter of military defeat.

The previous plenary debate, on a bill to grant the military the power to seize horses and transportation for mobilization purposes, shortly turned into a prelude to the War Production Law debate, as might well be expected, since the Law Regarding the Seizure of Horses and Means of Transport was largely a redundant version of several articles of the War Production Law.³³⁶ Minority position representative Refel in this debate accused the Justice Committee of being stuffed with the “super-patriots” from each party, willing and eager to rubber-stamp government bills.³³⁷ He emphasized that the government was exaggerating the urgency and importance of these bills. Interestingly, he also termed the War Production Law a bill to establish state socialism, since under its provisions the military, and thus by extension the state, would exercise total control over all aspects of the economy.³³⁸ He further argued that those who decide on matters of war and peace should also contribute to the war – in the War Production Law, the wealthy are concerned only with the question “do I profit by mobilization or do I not?”³³⁹ If, though, the bill is understood as not only providing for security but also for re-entrenching pre-existing power relationships, the bill's solicitude towards the propertied classes becomes an intentional rather than incidental effect.

The Czech Social Democrat, Representative Erner, continued Refel's line of thinking, arguing that the War Production Law “laid the populace and their property forward as a sacrifice

³³⁶*Stenographische Protokolle*, 21st Session, 128th Sitzung, 14th Dec. 1912. 6243.

³³⁷*Ibid.*, 6245.

³³⁸*Ibid.*, 6244. As a critique it seems strange for a Marxist, but the hegemony of the military was not quite as congenial to the Austro-Marxists as the hegemony of the proletariat.

³³⁹*Ibid.*, 6245.

(*Opfer*) to the state.”³⁴⁰ In the course of his speech, he was interrupted by the German Nationalist Representative, Neuntafel, who besmirched his patriotism and that of his party, and in his response Erner argued that he and his party would wish that “patriotism would not always be conflated with the rattling of sabers and the belief that only force secures the power of the state.”³⁴¹ For Erner, the state was meant to serve the interests of its people, and therefore he and his party must oppose the War Production Law on behalf of the lower classes, those who elected them. The government's response to labor unrest, after all, would be to suppress it with “the bayonet, with weaponry, with military force.”³⁴²

The majority representatives represented a thoroughly authoritarian and statist position. Dr. Stojan presented another disaster metaphor, arguing that the War Production Law was like fire insurance – a burden, but better than incineration. The burden which the draft placed on the public, though, was lightened by the fact that “it is sweet to die for one's fatherland.”³⁴³ Ritter von Haller further argued that the Social Democratic opposition was irresponsible in failing to grant the state “that which is necessary for its maintenance...we are conscious that this law is necessary for the army and its battle-readiness.”³⁴⁴ State patriotism, then, came to be defined in a very narrow way, one which emphasized not only allegiance to the Dual Monarchy but also support for its then-current social and political order.

The rest of the plenary debate over the War Production Law played out along similar lines, though with the admixture of a number of different issues. Dr. Hübschmann accused the

³⁴⁰Ibid., 6248.

³⁴¹Ibid., 6249.

³⁴²Ibid., 6250. He was right, as the First World War was to demonstrate.

³⁴³Ibid., 6251. *Dulce est, pro patria mori.*

³⁴⁴Ibid., 6252.

government of mis-representing the bill by denying that it expanded the populace's military obligations, while Dr. Stölzel complained of obstructionary tactics and urged an acceptance of the state's "codification of the state's emergency rights in wartime."³⁴⁵ In defense of the government's ability to seize industries and compel labor, Dr. Stölzel again quoted that "the welfare of the commonwealth is the supreme law."³⁴⁶ How that commonwealth would be defined, though, he left unstated. The position representative for the Polish Social Democrats, Dr. Liebermann, accused the military of bringing the law out "with a great hullabaloo [*Gekrach*]" in an attempt to stampede the *Reichsrat* into handing over the realm to the military in their panic.³⁴⁷ In his words, the draft created a situation in which "in the state of war every military commander would have the right to administer and dispose of the freedom, property, and lives of every citizen of the state until their fiftieth year of life."³⁴⁸ The subordination of the entire population to military discipline and military justice was especially odious to Liebermann, and indeed to most of his colleagues. The War Production Law, under Article Six, as the German Social Democrat Ferdinand Hanusch noted, would usher in an era of total war and economic dislocation, and lead to the military seizing entire industries under the War Production Law. Such seizure "would have the result that the workers shall be transformed into helots" and that the draft was a return of serf labor, or Robot.³⁴⁹ While an odious outcome for Social Democrats, the return of the Robot would be by no means uncongenial to many Habsburg elites.

Such arguments achieved no purpose and made no difference, despite their general

³⁴⁵Ibid., 6275.

³⁴⁶Ibid., 6280. *Salus rei publicae suprema lex esto*.

³⁴⁷Ibid. He was likely correct.

³⁴⁸Ibid., 6282.

³⁴⁹Ibid., 6390.

accuracy. Although minor parties organized several attempts to mobilize obstruction against the passage of the bill or at least to force acceptance of minority revisions, the draft War Production Law was accepted on the second reading without amendment.³⁵⁰ The Austrian Minister-President, Count Stürgkh, had railroaded the *Reichsrat* with “the threat and the whip of Article Fourteen [of the Austrian Constitution],” which gave the Emperor the power to dissolve the *Reichsrat* and promulgate laws on his own authority in an emergency.³⁵¹ Ferdinand Hanusch, speaking for the largest bloc of opposition voters in the *Reichsrat*, cited the credible threat of promulgation under Article Fourteen as the reason why the Social Democrats were unable to deploy obstruction to prevent the passage of such a bill.³⁵²

³⁵⁰Ibid., 6424.

³⁵¹Ibid., 6281.

³⁵²Ibid., 6393.

Conclusion

The passage of the War Production Law gave the state the right to essentially nationalize any industrial or commercial operation deemed important for war production. This process converted the workers employed by the nationalized concerns into militia laborers subject to military discipline and military courts. These workers were no longer employed by capital in a free labor market, but were instead in a state of involuntary servitude, subordinated directly to the military. Disobedience became treason, changing jobs became desertion, and striking became mutiny. The outbreak of the First World War saw the widespread application of the War Production Law. Important war industries were nationalized whole-sale in late July, 1914, and their entire workforce placed under military discipline and forbidden to leave.³⁵³ This created a system under which labor service became equivalent, in the legal sense, with military service. Motivated by the need to mobilize citizenry on behalf of the war effort and driven by the Habsburg military's grandiose conceptions of military necessity, this system was zealously enforced by a military establishment pre-disposed to radical solutions and contemptuous of the citizens of the Habsburg state. The War Production system further sought to exercise the coercive power of the state to mobilize the productivity of industrial labor without legitimating their demands or giving them claim to be equal members of the civic polity. The criticisms of the War Production Law's opponents were almost prophetic.

Ironically, though, in all the major Social Democratic parties the leadership announced itself loyal to Emperor and Fatherland and supported the war effort with all their power.³⁵⁴ The

³⁵³Miroslav Havrlant and others, *Dějiny Ostravy: Vydáno k 700. Výročí založení města* (Nakladatelství Profil: Ostrava, 1967) 401.

³⁵⁴See for example the Vienna Police Directorate's report of Nov. 8th, 1914 on the position of the German party leadership in Vienna. AVA Mdl 22i.g.16282, reprinted in: Rudolf Neck, *Arbeiterschaft und Staat im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1918* (Vienna, Europa-Verlag, 1964). 8-11.

German Social Democratic party leadership, for example, exhorted their followers to “show that the men of the class struggle will also give their last breath in service to the flag!”³⁵⁵ Though the left wings of the ethnically divided Austrian Social Democratic parties did contain members who urged a general strike against the war in solidarity with the European working class, they failed to carry the day.³⁵⁶ Indeed, by 1917 Social Democratic political organizations had become fully integrated into the state and formed an indispensable prop to its authority.³⁵⁷

The War Production Law did, then, succeed in creating an alternative militarization regime which both substantially strengthened the military potential of the Habsburg state and drew upon industrial labor without interfering with pre-existing political and social power relations. Taking advantage of a very government-friendly *Reichsrat*, credible fears of war against Serbia, Russia, or both, and solicitude to Hungarian opposition to expansion of real army strength, the Habsburg government radically reoriented its wartime industrial mobilization measures in a way unprecedented in Europe. The Dual Monarchy, then, became the first state in Europe to orient its war mobilization measures forward towards an era of industrial total war instead of either backward to the both excessive and counterproductive measures with which Germany sought to refight the Napoleonic Wars, or, like Russia, France, and Great Britain, to business as usual.

³⁵⁵*Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege*, ed. Ferdinand Hanusch and Emanuel Adler (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927) 3.

³⁵⁶Austro-Hungarian Social Democracy was split between German, Czech, Yugoslav, Italian, and Polish parties. See Hermann J.W. Kuprian, “On the Threshold of the Twentieth Century: State and Society in Austria before World War I,” in *Austria in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Rolf Steininger, Günter Bischof and Michael Gehler (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002). 23.

³⁵⁷Hans Hautmann, “Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch. Die Ernährungslage der österreichischen Arbeiter im Ersten Weltkrieg” in *Bewegung und Klasse: Studien zur österreichischen Arbeitergeschichte*, ed. Gerhard Botz (Vienna, Munich, Zürich: Europaverlag, 1978) 677.

CHAPTER THREE: BLOOD AND SOIL: ETHNO-NATIONALIST VIOLENCE AND THE COMING OF WAR

*Kdybych se narodil před sto lety
V tomhle městě
U Larischů na zahradě trhal bych květy
Své nevěstě*

*Moje nevěsta by byla dcera ševcova
Z domu Kamińskich odněkud ze Lvova
Kochał bych ją i pieścił
Chyba lat dwieście*

*Bydleli bychom na Sachsenbergu
V domě u žida Kohna
Nejhezčí ze všech těšínských šperků
Byla by ona*

*Mluvila by polsky a trochu česky
Pár slov německy a smála by se hezky
Jednou za sto let zázrak se koná
Zázrak se koná*

-Jaromír Nohavica, "Těšínská"

*Had I been born a hundred years ago
In this city
At Larisch in the garden I would pick flowers
For my bride*

*My bride would have been a daughter of a cobbler
From the house of Kaminski from somewhere near Lviv
I would have loved her and caressed her
Surely two hundred years*

*We would have lived in Sachsenberg
In our home at the Jewish Kohn
The most beautiful of all Těšín's jewels
Would be she*

*She would have spoken Polish and some Czech
Several words of German and laughed so beautifully
Once in a hundred years a miracle occurs
A miracle occurs*

The weeks immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War were tumultuous ones, marked by continuing ethno-nationalist conflict and continued labor actions. These conflicts continued the frictions which drove Ostravsko politics in the late imperial era. A wave of ethno-nationalist mob violence stressed the ability of the police apparatus to maintain public order while ethno-nationalist activists instrumentalized the disorder to drive their competing political narratives and legitimate their claims to power and position. Worker militancy aimed at defending workers' living standards and dignity against arbitrary attack, and the various organs of state administration and law enforcement worked to maintain order and stability in the district. The first three weeks of July 1914 were the final period of normalcy for the inhabitants of the Ostrava-Karviná industrial district, and although desperate negotiations were underway in the chancelleries and courts of Europe activists, workers, administrators, and local security personnel continued to operate according to their accustomed scripts.³⁵⁸

These scripts had, however, already become inadequate to the broader context in which these workers and activists were imbricated. The assassination of the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife in Sarajevo on June 28th shocked the region and swept the headlines - but only briefly.³⁵⁹ Public life in Ostravsko quickly moved on, returning to previous concerns and arguments. The upper echelons of the Monarchy's government, though, were not so blasé. As the Ballhausplatz and the General Staff increasingly anticipated the arrival of war, previously accepted modes of hyperbolic politics appeared increasingly threatening.

³⁵⁸By 'scripts' I mean here a range of accustomed behaviors and rituals that operated within a particular interpretive framework, a set of circumstances and assumptions that give meaning to particular behaviors. I wish to stress here in particular the *performative* character of public behaviors. For example, substantial research has led historians to "interpret many of the most egregious examples of nationalist conflict in terms of political ritual with its own predictable dynamics and limits...those parties that publicly performed rituals of nationalist obstruction in the legislative bodies were frequently ready and willing to negotiate in private..." Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) 8.

³⁵⁹AMO/ND 9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 1, 1914/52/1/Následník trůnu a jeho choť zavraždění!

More, ethno-nationalist politics had become increasingly sharp and violent, both rhetorically and actually. The sense of crisis emerging from the escalating street and mob violence, organized along ethnic lines, and labor militancy among the mining workforce fueled fears of disaster. Further, widespread clashes between mobs of demonstrators and Habsburg security organs - police and gendarme forces - combined with pre-existing concerns about russophile, serbophile, and anti-Habsburg Slavs to impel worries of violent resistance to mobilization measures in Ostravsko. An incipient crisis of governability swept the district, which in turn warranted a large-scale police and military response to restore Habsburg authority and civil order in this militarily essential industrial area.

The Czech-German antagonism had deep roots in Habsburg Central Europe, and was perhaps the most intractable and most important of the challenges facing Habsburg governance. Populations identified as Czech and as German taken together constituted 60% of the Cisleithanian population as well as providing the economic heart of the Monarchy. The Czech crownlands in particular - Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia - were highly industrialized and quite wealthy, responsible in 1910 for some 40% of Habsburg industrial output and 45% of Habsburg state revenue.³⁶⁰ Political antagonism dividing these two populations thus struck at the heart of the Monarchy's productive and economic potential. Further, the radical wings of both Czech and German nationalist movements contained elements hostile to the continued survival of the Monarchy in the form of pan-Germanism, pan-Slavism, and advocates of Czechoslovak independence.

Rapid industrialization and urbanization and the rise of a self-consciously national Czech movement in the second half of the 19th century threatened ethnic German control of first

³⁶⁰Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848-1918* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007) 212.

municipal and then state governments as well as their cultural and economic hegemony in the Czech crownlands. Halting moves to place Czech on a more equitable basis with German thus brought about enormous protests and pressures. The Stremayr Language Decree of 1880 ordered courts, district commissariats, and other Imperial-Royal administrative offices to deal with the Czech-speaking population in Czech, an act which the Budějovice/Budweis town council characterized as an "attempted rape of the German race in Bohemia."³⁶¹ Prime Minister Kazimierz Badeni's government fell amid massive protests in 1897 after issuing an ordinance to equalize treatment of German and Czech in internal government affairs as well, which would require all officials to speak both Czech and German, and the ordinance itself was revoked in 1899. Neither applied to Silesia, however.³⁶²

Out of many responses to this antagonism, three major approaches stand out. The first was the Moravian Compromise, a cadastral solution signed in 1905. In it, political and cultural life were separated into national cadasters, which is to say that officially-designated Czechs voted for officially-designated Czech candidates for officially-designated Czech seats in the state parliament, and vice versa. Czechs went to Czech schools and Germans went to German schools and generally speaking lived nationally-segregated lives in terms of their engagement with state and federal administration. Proposals to extend a similar system to Bohemia and Silesia were never adopted. The second was the federal government's introduction of the universal male franchise in 1907, intended to dilute nationalist political power. While briefly promising, this experiment ultimately failed to check the rise of nationalism as a political force and may indeed have accelerated it. The last approach was to continue the struggle for national dominance, a

³⁶¹Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) 56.

³⁶²Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 209-211.

solution favored by the Czech-national parties due to their ever-improving prospects. Though at the end of the First World War this strategy was rewarded with success by the declaration of the Czechoslovak Republic, before the war their stubbornness brought Bohemia to a standstill. In 1913 the Bohemian constitution and right to autonomous government was suspended, and the province was administered by decree from Vienna.³⁶³

Silesia, however, retained its autonomy and self-government without resorting to cadastral segregation. According to the 1910 census, German-speakers retained a plurality in the crownland with 43.9% of the population (about 326,000 people), followed by the 235,000 Polish-speakers at 31.7% of the population and the 180,000 Czech-speakers with 24.3%.³⁶⁴ Though neither the Stremayr nor Badeni decrees were extended to Silesia, the state parliament decided in 1907 to extend the right to decide their own languages of inner and outer administration to the various municipal administrations (*Gemeinde*) in Silesia, as well as in 1910 allowing Czech- and Polish-language textbooks to be used in Silesian schools.³⁶⁵

On the 12th of July, while the Monarchy's movers and shakers debated a response to Serbia's provocations, ethnic tensions in Ostravsko spilled over into a spasm of political agitation and then mob violence. The inciting incident was a celebration to be held on the 12th of July, the Fellowship Day of a Czech-national school organization, namely the Opava Foundation (*Matice Opavská*).³⁶⁶ This celebration, meant as a fundraiser, was to be held in Kateřinky/Katharein, a small municipality several miles outside of Opava/Troppau proper.³⁶⁷ Education policy had been

³⁶³Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 213.

³⁶⁴Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 214.

³⁶⁵Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 218.

³⁶⁶The *Matice opavská*, founded in 1877, was instrumental in the foundation and funding of a Czech *Gymnasium* in Opava/Troppau in 1883. See: Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 221.

³⁶⁷AMO/ND9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 15, 1914/56/1/Krvavé protičeské demonstrace v Opavě.

central to the Czech and German nationalization movements in the Czech lands for decades due to the connection between language and education. As both Czech- and German-speaking inhabitants of these areas were essentially indistinguishable socially or culturally, nationalist activists seized on linguistic difference as the key distinction between members of the Czech and German Nation.³⁶⁸ This focus then dictated the nationalist position on education. They rejected bilingual education as blurring the borders between Nations, and expended enormous amounts of money, time, and energy constructing private monolingual schools in areas without publically provided ones. Persuasion, bribery, threats, and even legal compulsion were wielded to bring children to the "appropriate" school to inculcate the children with national feeling and the national language.³⁶⁹ As the politics of education had long been an ethno-nationalist flashpoint in general and as the *Matice opavská* was specifically aimed at building up the Czech presence in Opava/Troppau, the German press in northeastern Moravia and Silesia was incensed over this "Czech invasion of German soil."³⁷⁰

There had been many incidents of ethno-nationalist unrest in the area in every permutation. Most recently, anti-German riots in Bilsko/Bielitz and Bialý/Biala had primed the ethnic German population of the area to resist perceived aggression by the Czech nationalist movement. Worse, though, was the report that a group of Serbian nationalist students would be coming to Opava/Troppau, the Silesian state capital, and then to Kateřinky/Katharein to participate in the festivities. The news that Serbian nationalists would be participating in this

³⁶⁸I use 'Nation' here instead of 'nation' to refer specifically to the imagined homogenous community sought after by ethno-nationalist activists in this area. The centrality of linguistic difference due to lack of alternative difference is Peter Bugge's contention - see Peter Bugge, "Czech Nation-Building, National Self-Perception and Politics, 1780-1914" (PhD diss., University of Aarhus, 1994) 26.

³⁶⁹For a deeper treatment, see Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008) 13-48.

³⁷⁰AMO/ND9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 15, 1914/56/1/Krvavé protičeské demonstrace v Opavě. *vpádu Čechů na německou půdu.*

Czech festival only two weeks after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo prompted a Sunday morning call for Opava/Troppau's Germans to join a protest gathering, to which several *Reichsrat* representatives were invited.³⁷¹

The Imperial-Royal District Government was perfectly well aware of the likelihood of an incident between an increasingly strident ethnic German protest and an increasingly assertive Czech-national and pan-Slav movement. The District Commissariat "for fear of conflict forbade the Czech procession from Opava/Troppau to Kateřinky/Katharein, but allowed the celebration to take place." The mayor of Opava/Troppau, though, "guaranteed the maintenance of order on the streets by intervention of the municipal police" and to that end "summoned up to a hundred policemen to Opava/Troppau."³⁷²

When Sunday dawned, the streets of Opava/Troppau were covered in anti-Czech flyers, calling on "true Germans" to "protect our city against the invasion of the Czechs!"³⁷³ The arrival information for the train carrying the Czech and Serbian activists was also helpfully printed on these flyers, and consequently a crowd of ethnic German protesters awaited the Slavic activists.³⁷⁴ In the resulting 'stormy demonstration,' mob violence broke out with its typical accompaniment of stones thrown and blows exchanged. Approximately two thousand people were involved on both sides.³⁷⁵ The bulk of the Opava/Troppau police force and their gendarme

³⁷¹AMO/ND9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 15, 1914/56/1/Krvavé protičeské demonstrace v Opavě.

³⁷²AMO/ND9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 15, 1914/56/1/Krvavé protičeské demonstrace v Opavě. *C.k. okresní hejtmanství z obavy před srážkami český průvod z Opavy do Kateřinek tedy zakazalo, slavnost však konati povolilo a do Opavy povolalo na 100 četníků vzdor tomu, že starosta města Opavy zaručil se udržeti v ulicích klid obecní policí.*

³⁷³AMO/ND9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 15, 1914/56/1/Krvavé protičeské demonstrace v Opavě. *Věrní Němci! Chraňte naše město před vpádem Čechů!*

³⁷⁴AMO/ND9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 15, 1914/56/1/Krvavé protičeské demonstrace v Opavě.

³⁷⁵AMO/ND9/Duch času/139/620/Jul. 15, 1914/56/1/Krvavé protičeské demonstrace v Opavě.

reinforcements from other areas of the district sought to maintain their cordon between the ethnic German mob and the Czech-national procession, though with some lack of success. On several occasions the police were driven to bayonet charges and their line was broken repeatedly, allowing the two groups to come into contact. The Czech-national contingent had brought along what they described as "self-defense units" drawn from the Sokol for precisely this sort of violence, and a melee broke out wherever the two groups met.³⁷⁶

Despite these self-defense units, two members of the Moravian parliament accompanying the Czech-national procession, Representatives Gudrich and Lukeš, suffered wounds in the course of being beaten by the ethnic German mob. The areas of the security line initially held by Gendarme forces held, while the sections of the line held by the municipal police force quickly dissolved into disorder. The intervention of the Gendarme reserves under the orders of the Imperial-Royal State Police Commissioner Dohlenschall re-established the security cordon at the cost of some injuries. Ultimately, the street fighting was broken up through military intervention, with the 13th Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment deploying with fixed bayonets into the streets of Opava/Troppau. The Czech-national celebrants retreated to the train station and departed with stones bouncing off their train cars and shouts of "Fuj" and "Down with the Czechs" filling the air. The infantrymen remained at their posts deep into the night, finally being recalled around 10:30 PM while the local Czech-national participants in the procession were escorted to their homes by gendarme detachments.³⁷⁷

The local ramifications of this 'Bloody Sunday' were far-reaching. The immediate consequences were of course not minor - approximately two hundred people were wounded, with twenty-nine people requiring medical attention. A further fifteen people were arrested, and the

³⁷⁶Ibid., *Čeští lidé v krajní sebeochraně*

³⁷⁷Ibid.; AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 56/4-5/Úřední zpráva o krvavé neděli v Opavě.

city suffered some economic damage, due both to its streets being used as ammunition and to the reduction in economic activity following the riots. Riotous activity continued far into the night even without the presence of the Czech-national procession.³⁷⁸ More broadly, though, one the main warning signals demonstrated on Bloody Sunday was the armed confrontation between the 13th I.R. Infantry and elements of the municipal police, who "supported or at minimum protected" the "publicly demonstrating [German] rabble at scattered points around the beleaguered procession."³⁷⁹ This confrontation was ominous, as it struck directly at the ability of the civilian administration to govern. If the police could not be relied upon to keep order, then the only recourse was military coercion.

That elements of the local police force in Opava/Troppau were more sympathetic to those protesting the needlessly provocative parading of enemies not only of the German national movement but also, in the figures of the Serbian students, the enemies of the Habsburg state, is not particularly surprising. The local constabulary, drawn from and deeply enmeshed in the local context of Silesian political and social life, could hardly be expected to be completely free of opinions on the most pressing issues of the day, and Opava/Troppau was a stronghold of ethnic-German political and cultural power. That they could, perhaps, no longer be confidently expected to carry out their duties maintaining the peace, though, was a new and unsettling development, and that even a few policemen would join a mob of whatever character in opposition to other elements of the Habsburg internal security apparatus was an ominous development for Silesian

³⁷⁸AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 56/1/Podrobnosti demonstrací; AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 56/1/Hospodářské důsledky nedělních bouří; AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 56/4-5/Úřední zpráva o krvavé neděli v Opavě.

³⁷⁹AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 56/1/Vojsko muselo zakročovat proti policii. *V některých ulicích v Opavě došlo při nedělních demonstracích i k zjevným konfliktům mezi vojskem a policií městskou, která křiklavým způsobem a téměř veřejně demonstrující lužu podporovala anebo aspoň chránila.*

governability. The Slavic-nationalist³⁸⁰ elements of northeastern Moravian and Silesian society seized on this fresh evidence of police hostility to pillory the ethnically-German dominated Silesian state government and Opava/Troppauer municipal government. Even some elements of German-identified society were taken aback. The German Social Democratic paper *Schlesische Volkspresse* sharply criticized both Mayor Walther Kudlich and the German-nationalist leadership in Opava/Troppau for tolerating the outbreak of violence and failing to effectively deploy the municipal police and called for the federalization of the Opava/Troppau police force.³⁸¹

The Slavic-nationalist response to the 'Sunday Events,' as they came to be called, reflected the broader patterns of ethno-nationalist conflict in western Silesia and northeastern Moravia and spoke to the relationships between Slavic ethno-nationalists, German ethno-nationalists, and the various organs of the Habsburg state. The response was two-fold. First, and most typically, the various organizations composing the Slav-nationalist movement inveighed against what they characterized as German violence, crimes, or offenses against peace, order, and culture. Second, though, the 'Sunday Events' provided a springboard for attacks on the supposed hostility and unreliability of many of the local administrations of western Silesia with an emphasis on the Silesian state government, located in Opava/Troppau, and the city government of Opava/Troppau.

In an editorial following the initial reports from Opava/Troppau demonstratively titled "After the Opava Pogrom," the editorial board of *Duch času* as expected inveighed against the

³⁸⁰In the context of fighting against German-nationalist antagonism various Slavic-nationalist groups often operated together. However, the use of 'Slavic-nationalist' is not meant to obscure real differences between, most saliently, Czech and Polish nationalist groups. These two groups of nationalists were frequently at loggerheads in Silesia, as Czech-national activists aimed to Czechify the crownland and Polish-national activists aimed to claim it for a prospective Polish state.

³⁸¹AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 56/4/Němečtí soc. demokrate proti německým štváčům.

"crimes of the Opavan Germans," a "gutless fanatical mob" by whom "the sons and daughters of our land were tyrannized".³⁸² Specific imprecations were further leveled against particular hate objects of the Slav-nationalist movement. Targets included the Pan-Germanist weekly newspaper *Deutsche Wehr*, founded to propagate Georg von Schönerer's ideas in Austrian Silesia in 1892, the Moravian-Silesian *Nordmark*, established in 1894 as the *Bund der Deutschen Ostböhmens* with its seat in Opava/Troppau and enlisting 25,000 members to act as a 'protective association' (*Schutzverein*) for German power in the eponymous 'Northern March' of the putative German nation.³⁸³ Of course, the German-nationalist Youth Corps (*Jungmannschaft*) and Athletics Society (*Turnerverein*) came in for their share of abuse as well.

However, the main thread of the editorial's argument was directed against the administrative organs which enabled this 'gutless fanatical mob' to tyrannize Czech sons and daughters "before the eyes of the security organs, which were summoned in order to protect them!"³⁸⁴ To the editorial board, the events of Bloody Sunday further demonstrated that German-nationalist chauvinism had captured all of the important levers of power in the Silesian state government, with the notable exception of Count Maximilian Coudenhove, the Silesian President.

The chief of the state postal directorate, Rasch, was supposedly a "metallic hater of everything Slavic" and along with "nearly all councillors and upper councillors of the state administration, ostentatiously presented themselves for the celebratory procession."³⁸⁵ All the

³⁸²AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 57/1/Po opavském pogromu. za bílého dne bylo ohromným sfanatisovaným davem...synové i dcery vlastní země byli ztýráni...

³⁸³Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalisms: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848-1918* (Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, 2007) 217.

³⁸⁴AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 57/1/Po opavském pogromu. ...před očima bezpečnostních orgánů, které byly povolány, aby je právě chránily!

³⁸⁵Ibid., ...Rasch, kovaný nenávisník všeho slovanského a téměř věchní radové a vrchní radové státních úřadů,

other councillors and upper councillors who remained at home instead of rioting, the editorial argued, were simply careerists who wished to hide their German-nationalist sympathies from the broader public but nevertheless putatively supported the *Nordmark* financially. Among this group the editorialists identified State Councillor Klingner, who served as the Chairman of the District Commissariat, and Court Councillor Karl Roth von Rothenhorst, who served as the deputy State President.³⁸⁶ Direct responsibility for the Czech blood shed in Opava/Troppau was, in this telling firstly the responsibility of the mayor, who was presumed to have provided instructions "that the German police take a passive position regarding their co-national rioters."³⁸⁷ The mayor, Walther Kudlich, had been a founding member of the *Nordmark* organization, and was an entirely credible antagonist for Slav-nationalist activists whether or not the presumed instructions existed.³⁸⁸ Behind Kudlich, though, was the Silesian state administration, which stood accused of "delivering the lives of Czechs into the hands of the Opavan police."³⁸⁹ The editorial concluded straightforwardly - "the Czech people can only be satisfied by the removal of the governmental system and as a first step the removal of the unqualified state leadership."³⁹⁰

Nor did the Slavic-national population of the district restrict themselves to fulminating in editorials. On Wednesday, the 15th of July, the municipal authorities in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, the most important Czech-controlled city in Silesia, called a special afternoon session to respond to

dostavili se ostentativně k slavnostní schůzi.

³⁸⁶Ibid.

³⁸⁷Ibid., ...aby němečtí policajti chovali se tak pasivně k svým konnacionálním výtržníkům...

³⁸⁸Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 217.

³⁸⁹AMO/Duch času/July 15, 1914/Nr. 57/1/Po opavském pogromu., ...zemská vláda dala životy českých lidí do rukou opavské policie...

³⁹⁰Ibid., Satisfakce českému lidu může se dostáti jenom odstraněním vládního systému a v prvé řadě odstraněním nezpůsobilé zemské hlavy.

Bloody Sunday. Mayor Gustav Poppe's statement expressed "true sorrow and the greatest outrage at reports of every anti-Czech brutality whose occurrence was witnessed in the streets of Opava on the 12th of July...", for which he held most directly responsible the "German rabble of Opava led by local German intellectuals."³⁹¹

However, the statement also accused the state government of neglect of and indifference to their responsibilities towards the public - "The municipal committee of Polish Ostrava speaks with shocked consternation regarding the subject, that the state government failed to take such security measures, by which every attack of the enraged Opavan/Troppauer guttersnipes, whether in simple cloth hats, top hats, or uniforms, could have been averted," especially in light of the ample warning of an oncoming clash in the previous weeks.³⁹² However, in this telling the dictatorial demands of the German-dominated Opavan/Troppauer City Hall overrode the state government's responsibility to keep the peace and allow orderly processions and demonstrations. For Poppe and his council, the issue was one of establishing complete security and the free enjoyment of the constitutional rights of the Slavic population of Silesia. The best method to achieve this aim, they claimed, was through the nationalization of the Opavan/Troppauer municipal police force.

In a simultaneously released statement on behalf of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, municipal councillor Čeněk Pospíšil endorsed Poppe's statement condemning German-nationalist depredations in the streets of Opava/Troppau. Pospíšil's statement similarly

³⁹¹AMO/Duch času/ND 9/139/620/Jul. 18, 1914/57/2/Projev obec. zastupitelstva v Polské Ostravě o krvavé neděli opavské. ...vzal s výrazem opravdového politování a největšího rozhořčení na vědomí zprávu o všech ptoříčeských surovostech, jejichž svědkem se staly Opavské ulice dne 12. července....německou luzou Opavskou vedenou tamnější německou inteligencí.

³⁹²Ibid., *Obecní výbor Pol. Ostravský vyslovuje s úžasem podiv nad tím, že zemská vláda neučinila taková bezpečnostní opatření, aby každému útoku rozlícených opavských uličníků ať již byli v prostém klobouku neb cylindru neb ve stejnokroji mohlo býti zabráněno...* The hats and uniform are here acting as metonyms for social position.

emphasized the importance of Slavic cultural and national freedom in Silesia, a (barely) majority Slavic state - "[f]orceful suppression and weakening of national minorities [meaning here in Cisleithania, rather than Silesia] would necessarily lead directly to terrible consequences in a land so nationally mixed as Silesia."³⁹³ On this point, he continued, the proletariat of all nationalities was of one mind, and he called on German-national workers to join Czech-national workers in inter-nationality solidarity. For his part, Pospíšil conceded "with good grace...that German social democrats to their credit furiously denounced the German agitators and strongly admonished German workers against participating in witch hunts against Czechs."³⁹⁴

Various slavic-nationalist organizations quickly organized a series of meetings and demonstrations in order to protest against German-nationalist acts of violence and the local and state governments which, in the view of many, enabled or supported such violence. A small gathering of Czechoslovak Social Democrats took place in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau on Friday, the 17th of July, but the first mass gatherings took place on Sunday, the 19th of July.³⁹⁵ A number of events took place that day. The first and most important was primarily a Czech-national gathering specifically aimed at protesting the Sunday Events in Opava/Troppau, which took place at 10:00 AM in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau in the plaza before Count Wlczek's manor.³⁹⁶

As soon as the planning for this event became known, the Imperial-Royal Police

³⁹³Ibid., *Násilné utloukaní a znásilňování národnostních menšin muselo by vésti ku strašným přímo důsledkem v zemi tak národnostně smíšené jako je Slezsko*. This was in line with Austro-Marxist thinking on the nationality question - to defuse the relevance of the issue through ethno-national autonomy, thereby opening up space for the revolution of the proletariat. Cf. Brno/Brünn Program, 1899.

³⁹⁴Ibid., *S povděkem konstatuji, že němečtí sociální demokraté vzteklé řádění německých štváčů po zasluzе odsoudili a německé dělnictvo před účasti na štvanicích proti českému lidu úsilovně varovali*.

³⁹⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 16, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Gendarmeriekonzentrierung: an das K.K. Gendarmerie-Bezirks-Kommando.

³⁹⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 16, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Nationale Veranstaltungen in Poln.-Ostrau.

Commissariat moved into high gear. Gatherings earlier in the week had also commanded the attention of the police - the Social Democratic meeting on Friday had drawn a reaction force of twenty-five men - but nothing on the scale now brought to bear.³⁹⁷ The Imperial-Royal police councillor for Polish Ostrava/Ostrau feared that these Sunday gatherings bore the potential to explode into mass violence if not handled appropriately. Going so far as to forbid the gathering, while within the Police Commissariat's legal authority, would have almost certainly called into being the very protests which the measure would have aimed at suppressing. More, suppression would prevent the pressure of public outrage from being expressed and thus drained away, making violence more rather than less likely. In his mind, the meetings would almost certainly unfold peacefully as long as neither ethnic German provocateurs nor overly-aggressive security forces interfered. Nevertheless, the possibility remained that the meetings would sufficiently whip up the crowd to create a threat to public safety and order.³⁹⁸ To thread this needle, all available police power was to be concentrated in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau from 8:00 AM until late in the evening on that Sunday, and the district's available Gendarmes were to be located nearby for reinforcement if necessary.³⁹⁹ Though several speakers condemned the police presence as being an anti-Czech insult, one security report suggests that the active role for the assembled police presence was to "hold the German population away from the demonstrations" and thus to ensure order.⁴⁰⁰

The meeting itself, called under the aegis of the *Politický spolek* (Politics Club), brought

³⁹⁷ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 16, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Gendarmeriekonzentrierung: an das K.K. Gendarmerie-Bezirks-Kommando.

³⁹⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 16, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Nationale Veranstaltungen in Poln.-Ostrau.

³⁹⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 16, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Gendarmeriekonzentrierung.

⁴⁰⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Nationale Veranstaltungen in Poln.-Ostrau und Witkowitz.

together an estimated four thousand people, of whom the majority were workers.⁴⁰¹ This figure, though certainly meaningful, represented a significantly smaller turnout than originally expected.⁴⁰² The Chairman of the *Spolek*, Dr. Ferdinand Pelc, chaired the meeting, and as his deputies were elected Boleslaus Włodek to stand for the Polish population and Peter Pavlán, the head of the Illness Fund (*Krankenkassenkontroller*), to represent the Social Democrats.⁴⁰³ The agenda for the meeting was to provide a forum for responses to the events of Bloody Sunday. Speaking were Pelc himself, the Silesian parliamentary representative and mayor of Polish Ostrava/Ostrau Gustav Poppe, the Czech teacher Nohel, the editor of the Czech-language paper *Ostravský Deník* (Ostravan Daily) Knotek, Peter Pavlán, the Polish over-teacher (*Oberlehrer*) Swieżewski, parliamentary representative Jan Prokeš, a Mrs. Urbanik representing Czech motherhood, and the Silesian parliamentary representative Gudrich.

As in the other threads of reaction to Bloody Sunday among Slavic-nationalist elements, the two major elements of the response were attacks on German-national elements and attacks on the local governments. Pelc, opening the meeting, connected the ethnic German violence in Opava/Troppau to a series of previous events in Brno/Brünn, Šternberk/Sternberg, and Bílsko/Bielitz, all of which, in his telling, involved German-national violence directed against Slav-nationalist activist groups. To introduce the remaining speakers, he argued that these "links in the chain of violence, which in recent times the Germans have exercised against the Slavs" required, nay, demanded that the Slavic population of Silesia take a position on the issue.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Ad Zl. I-1827/Relation.

⁴⁰²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Nationale Veranstaltungen in Poln.-Ostrau und Witkowitz.

⁴⁰³This was a marked turn towards inter-Slav cooperation - a decade earlier, Pelc had argued that the "Polish danger was equal to the German one." Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 222.

⁴⁰⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Ad Zl. I-1827/Relation.

Silesian Parliament member Poppe spoke next, expanding on Pelc's historical analysis. His argument began with Germanic discrimination against Slavic culture in Silesia generally - underfunding schools, devaluing Czech as a language of administration, and franchise discrimination, specifically. The three Silesian parliamentary delegates identifying themselves with the Slavic-national movement should, *pace* Poppe's cadastral analysis, have at least five compatriots to be truly representative.⁴⁰⁵ These humiliations to Slav-national pride reached their peak in the streets of Opava/Troppau, where "the Czechs were refused entry in the capital of the majority Slavic province and... they there were bloodily beaten by the mob."⁴⁰⁶ The responsibility for this assault was "in the first line that of the state offices, who, regardless as how they have repeatedly made themselves clear, that the Opavan/Troppaur city police are not in a position to provide protection nor are they willing to do so."⁴⁰⁷ Poppe accused Mayor Kudlich of having himself been involved in the ethnic-German agitation in Opava/Troppau leading up to Bloody Sunday and of standing peacefully by and watching the mob attack the procession. Unexpectedly enough, though, he did not call for Kudlich to be prosecuted or investigated or punished, but asserted that "The leader of the state government [Count von Coudenhove] must be brought to answer for his actions, and the incompetent city police must be defeated."⁴⁰⁸ Precisely what he meant by that is unclear.

The Czech teacher Nohel was a member of the procession assaulted in Opava/Troppau, and he leveraged his experiences into a call for peaceful protest and unity as befits a cultured

⁴⁰⁵Slav-identified citizens represented a majority of the Silesian population; only 43.9% of the population were German-identified in the 1910 census. Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 214.

⁴⁰⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Ad Zl. I-1827/Relation.

⁴⁰⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Ad Zl. I-1827/Relation.

⁴⁰⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Ad Zl. I-1827/Relation. Poppe's use of 'defeated' [beseitigt] is clearly meant metaphorically but it is unclear what precisely he meant by the term.

people. He also used the opportunity to sharply criticize the security precautions, arguing that if there had been the same quantity of security personnel available in Opava/Troppau as were deployed in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau to keep watch on the meeting at which he was speaking then no unrest would or could have occurred. This demonstrated to Nohel the government's priorities, a line which the next speaker continued.

Knotek, editor of the *Ostravský Deník*, sketched out a plan of action for continued struggle against the supposed headless bureaucratism of the Austrian government. Guilty officials in the State government ought be called to answer for their actions and removed from their posts. Nationalist conflict must be "prosecuted with all energy in the cultural and economic realms" while "[i]n Silesia one must also prosecute the struggle for a just electoral reform."⁴⁰⁹ The emphasis here as in the broader Czech-nationalist movement was on neither overthrowing the Monarchy or national independence. Habsburg administration in this telling could and ought be improved, especially the German-nationalist Silesian state administration, but in Knotek's narrative state failures merited reform rather than destruction. For Knotek, then, the next step was merely to continue instrumentalizing the wealth and productivity of the Slavic majority in Silesia to put pressure on the German-national elements which still dominated there.

Controller Pavlán, Over-teacher Swieśewski, and Mrs. Urbanik largely limited their remarks to promises of support and coalition against Germanic and Germanizing elements in Silesia. Pavlán announced the participation of the Czech Social Democrats in the protests of the Czech bourgeois parties, and emphasized that the German Social Democrats had condemned their co-nationals as part of the broader Austro-Marxist program of national federation. Swieśewski declared the solidarity of the Polish people with the Czechs in their struggle against the Germanic elements in Ostrava/Troppau, though he does not appear to have been offering a

⁴⁰⁹Ibid.

programmatic statement for any particular Polish-national organization. Mrs. Urbanik spoke to the parents in the crowd, commiserating with the difficulties of raising children "in their mother tongue" and warning them to "send their children to German schools."⁴¹⁰

Representative Prokeš, true to his reputation as a nationalist firebrand, sharply criticized the state government in Opava/Troppau for their failures to fulfill their responsibilities. In the name of the Czech people he called for the resignation or removal of the state president (Maximilian Coudenhove) and his deputy (Karl Roth). Further, he called on the Slavic representatives of the Silesian *Landtag* to render activity therein impossible until the Silesian electoral process was reformed to take consideration of the Slavic majority in Silesia.⁴¹¹

Despite the sensitivity of the subject matter, the rally remained peaceful, and those assembled gave the security personnel present no cause to intervene. However, following Prokeš' concluding remarks a group of participants in the rally marched through Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau in the direction of Vítkovice/Witkowitz. While en route, they sang nationalist songs and shouted imprecations against the Silesian state government and against Germans in general, and upon arrival at their goal, the German House, and set about to start trouble. At this point, the presence of a powerful gendarme cordon separating the Czech-national crowd and the German House prevented a riot from brewing up, and ultimately the crowd dispersed without violence.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰Ibid.

⁴¹¹Ibid. The 1907 electoral reform granting universal manhood suffrage in Cisleithania was valid only for elections to the lower house of the Cisleithanian Parliament (*Reichsrat*). Elections to the Silesian Parliament (*Landtag*) were still held according to a curial system which increased the value of the German vote primarily at the expense of the poorer Polish population and prevented the slight numerical preponderance of Slavic voters from being translated into a parliamentary majority. See: Ernst Hellbling, "Die Landesverwaltung in Cisleithanien," 262 in: Adam Wandruszka, Peter Urbanitsch, eds. *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848-1918. Bd. II: Verwaltung und Rechtswesen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975) 190-269.

⁴¹²ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/2/Jul. 20, 1914/Zl. I-1827/Nationale Veranstaltungen in Poln.-Ostrau und Witkowitz.

Later that same day, however, a number of other events took place which stretched the available security forces to their limits. A small gathering of the Polish-national organization *Sila* (Strength) took place at the Tomsa Gasthaus in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau at around three o'clock, attended by perhaps four hundred people. A procession through Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau followed, but concluded without incident.⁴¹³

The real problems began later that day in Hrabová/Hrabowa and Wüldchen, where a Sokol performance and festival and a German worker's festival were respectively taking place. The original Sokol plan was for the various chapters in the region to gather in Vítkovice/Witkowitz at the Czech House and from there to march as a group to Hrabová/Hrabowa. However, by order of the Vítkovice/Witkowitz municipal government, all marches through Vítkovice/Witkowitz for the day were banned, and by order of the Police Directorate directed to use particular streets circumventing Vítkovice/Witkowitz on their way to and from Hrabová/Hrabowa.⁴¹⁴

This unusual measure was seen as necessary due to the German worker's festival taking place in Wüldchen, with the priority being keeping the participants in the two festivals as far apart as possible.⁴¹⁵ In this, these measures failed, and even on the Sokol march towards Hrabowa some scuffles occurred, though these were quickly broken up by municipal police and Gendarme intervention. Their return journey, however, following the festival, saw much worse. Upon entering Vítkovice/Witkowitz at around 9 PM, the Sokol column met with "a large number

⁴¹³Ibid.

⁴¹⁴Ibid. Sokols, like the German *Turnvereine* or Polish Sokóls, were nationalist gymnastics organizations from which the nationalist movements drew their manpower for organized violence. Sokol comes from the Czech word for falcon.

⁴¹⁵I have been as yet unable to find any non-German reference to this location.

of hostile Germans, and were received with curses and threats with clubs and so on."⁴¹⁶ The two groups, at this point totaling around two thousand people, overflowed the enormous efforts of the security personnel present, and despite multiple efforts to construct a cordon between the two groups a swirling melee developed in which numerous injuries were dealt and received on both sides. Even the inhabitants of the neighboring buildings got involved, throwing water, bottles, and stones more or less indiscriminately. It reportedly took a number of hours to fully clear the streets.⁴¹⁷

Special trains, laid out to transport about five hundred German-nationalist participants to and from a festival in Frýdek/Friedek, clattered towards Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau in a haze of nationalist songs and calls of *'Heil'* until passing through Malé Kunčice/Klein-Kuntschitz, where reportedly the train was pelted by stones and, in an unusual escalation, suffered random gunfire. Following the riot that night unknown perpetrators smashed windows at the Czech House, a Czech womens' school, and the Vítkovice/Witkowitz Bridge Construction Office, and the security apparatus went on high alert.⁴¹⁸

The next day, the 20th, news of the events of the previous day caused great agitation among the district's population. That evening, a secret meeting took place at the Czech House to discuss a response to the wounds suffered by adherents to the Czech cause the previous evening. Unfortunately, the German nationalists caught wind of this meeting and an angry crowd gathered in front while the meeting was taking place, while a crowd of gendarmes rushed to the scene to prevent a riot. Before events could come to a head, the General Director of the Vítkovice steelworks himself, Dr. Friedrich Schuster, arrived at the scene and by sheer force of personality

⁴¹⁶Ibid.

⁴¹⁷Ibid.

⁴¹⁸Ibid.

drove the German-nationalist crowd to dispersal, following which the besieged Czech nationalists were escorted out of the municipality by the assembled security personnel.⁴¹⁹

The series of riots and general sense of agitation in the district following this string of events prompted the Imperial-Royal Police Directorate to shift much-needed personnel into the area in preparation for yet more trouble. The Vítkovice/Witkowitz posts in particular were reinforced with men taken from nearby Moravian posts, with their places in turn taken by men on loan from Bohemian security forces.⁴²⁰

The next wave of violence broke out immediately afterwards, on Tuesday, the 21st, originating in Vítkovice/Witkowitz. An ethnic German mob gathered in front of the Czech House there, touching off a series of demonstrations that quickly grew heated. The ever-present gendarmes and municipal police broke up the demonstrations and dispersed the mob. However, with a protean resistance the ethnic German crowd gathered and regathered repeatedly across the city in response to Gendarme dispersals, only tapering off by around 9:30 that evening.⁴²¹

Though the German-nationalist demonstrations in Vítkovice/Witkowitz had remained peaceful, if perhaps only thanks to prompt police intervention, Czech-national rioters launched a wave of violence across the district. The tram car carrying the Imperial-Royal police councillor organizing the gendarme response as well as several gendarmes was the object of a hail of thrown stones, prompting intervention from the gendarmes targeted.⁴²² Several other tram cars carrying gendarmes and police officials were also bombarded with rocks while moving through Vítkovice/Witkowitz, and in the melee following gendarme attempts to clear the street passing

⁴¹⁹Ibid.

⁴²⁰Ibid.

⁴²¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 539/Demonstrationen und Exzesse.

⁴²²Ibid.

pedestrians were threatened with violence and the windows of many of the surrounding houses were smashed in.⁴²³

One contingent of Czech-national demonstrators, from Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, of approximately two hundred men, moved on to Hulváky/Hulwaken and Zábřeh/Zabreh. There they embarked on a rampage of vandalism in which they smashed hundreds of windows at the German *Volksschule*, ten large sheets of glass stored in a Vítkovice/Witkowitz Factory warehouse, and a number of windows at the Rosegger Kindergarten, leaving the teacher with light injuries. Finally, the mob smashed some fencing around the German sporting arena and smashed some windows in the Jewish cemetery building in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau.⁴²⁴ Attempts to vandalize or destroy the German schools in Vítkovice/Witkowitz and Svinov/Schönbrunn were narrowly beaten off by police detachments wielding naked steel, while in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau another Czech-national mob gathered near the Hotel National and refused to disperse. Mounted police forced the crowd away from the hotel, leaving a number of persons injured and a number of others arrested.⁴²⁵ Later in the evening the German school in Mariánské Hory/Marienberg became the target of another Czech-national riot, and again the gendarmes' demands for the crowd to disperse were met with cries of "Pfui!" and a hail of stones. The gendarmes sought to drive away the rioters by bayonet charges, and during the melee voices in the crowd reportedly yelled "Out Gendarmerie!", "Down with the Germans!", and "Strike them dead!"⁴²⁶ A shot from the crowd provoked a volley from the gendarmes, injuring eight

⁴²³"Neuerliche grosse Czechenexzesse in Witkowitz und Mährisch-Ostrau," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴²⁴ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 539/Demonstrationen und Exzesse.

⁴²⁵"Neuerliche grosse Czechenexzesse in Witkowitz und Mährisch-Ostrau," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴²⁶"Neuerliche grosse Czechenexzesse in Witkowitz und Mährisch-Ostrau," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

persons, several seriously. In the course of the melee one gendarme was seriously injured by a stone to the forehead, and a police commissioner seriously injured by a blow from a club, and following the dispersal fourteen rioters were arrested.⁴²⁷

The widespread violence did not end until some time before midnight. The pacification of Vítkovice/Witkowitz and Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau earlier in the evening had freed up gendarme and police manpower to shift into the area. Further, the Czech-dominated city council released an appeal to the rioters to desist and, following its failure, Municipal Councillor Zapletal addressed the crowd. The rioters then returned to their homes, and the gendarme blockades between Mariánské Hory/Marienberg and Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau were taken down at midnight.⁴²⁸

The *Reichspost*'s Opava/Troppau correspondent characterized the incidents as primarily acts of mob violence, perpetrated by crowds of “youths and unsavory elements... [who] committed various excesses and crimes against property”.⁴²⁹ Further, the correspondent, as others, anticipated that the following day would see a move against the mine shafts in Vítkovice/Witkowitz based on the energetic threats to that effect heard in the area.⁴³⁰ The *Neue Freie Presse*, however, primarily placed responsibility for the violence on the shoulders of the Czech Social Democrat Jan Prokeš, a *Reichsrat* delegate from Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, who had been on a speaking circuit in Ostravsko holding what the correspondent characterized as “inciting speeches.”⁴³¹ In this view, the violence was, in a sense, organized, rather than a largely

⁴²⁷“Neuerliche grosse Czechenexzesse in Witkowitz und Mährisch-Ostrau,” *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴²⁸“Neuerliche grosse Czechenexzesse in Witkowitz und Mährisch-Ostrau,” *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴²⁹“Große Ausschreitungen im Mährisch-Ostrauer Kohlenrevier,” *Reichspost*, July 23rd, 1914, Morgenblatt. 7.

⁴³⁰*Ibid.*

⁴³¹“Neuerliche grosse Czechenexzesse in Witkowitz und Mährisch-Ostrau,” *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

spontaneous outbreak of hooliganism.

The next day, the 22nd of July, saw only a brief respite in civil disorder during the day. The Vítkovice/Witkowitz municipality, unlike previous days, saw no demonstrations or incidents. This was due to the decisive actions of the General Directorate of the Steelworks in cooperation with the police, who sealed off the roads and rail lines into the municipality and ordered the closure of worker barracks inside of Vítkovice/Witkowitz by 8:00 PM. By sealing off all entrances into the town and confining the inhabitants to a form of house arrest, the Directorate prevented a repeat of the previous day's unrest inside the township. Though initially successful, the cordon surrounding the municipality became the site of "excesses which took on an almost revolutionary character."⁴³²

The crowd first formed in Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, where some eight hundred young men gathered in Market Square slightly before 9:00 PM. These men, characterized in one police report as members of chauvinist-national fraternities [*Burschen*], intended to march to Vítkovice/Witkowitz, the site of the Czech House. Frustrated in their ambition by the gendarme cordon closing off the streets, they instead aimed their ire at the gendarmes manning the barricades.

The gendarmes arrested one demonstrator, for reasons that are unclear, and thereby converted the demonstration into a riot. In response to the arrest the crowd undertook multiple attempts to storm the police barracks and free those imprisoned. Upon the arrival of reinforcements, the gendarmes sought to lift the siege of the watch room, where the arrestee was being held, and disperse the crowd. It was at this point that most of the injuries on both sides were suffered. A hail of stones from the mob was answered by repeated bayonet charges, in which surprisingly only two people, the workers Frans Brabec and Josef Larisch, were badly

⁴³²ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 539/Demonstrationen und Exzesse.

injured. The number of demonstrators receiving light wounds or injuries is unknown. Twelve gendarmes suffered injuries from thrown stones or various improvised missiles thrown out of the windows of the surrounding buildings. An unknown assailant fired several shots at the police and was answered in kind, but to no apparent effect on either side.⁴³³ The mob was only slowly dispersed, but as it lost momentum and splintered into smaller groups, the police eventually cleared the streets and by midnight the demonstration had ended.⁴³⁴ As a consequence of the riot an addition eight people were arrested, for a total of nine arrests.⁴³⁵

Following this outburst of mob violence the Imperial-Royal Police Directorate in Moravian Ostrava sent an urgent request for military assistance to the Silesian capital.⁴³⁶ Not only did it seem that the situation was dangerous and uncertain, but it also appeared to be worsening. Episodes of mob violence rooted in and justified by ethnic antagonisms, unlike simple hooliganism, invited retaliations that threatened to expand the unrest beyond the capacity of the civil authorities to control.⁴³⁷ The Police Commissariat further imposed a ban on festivals and demonstrations which seemed likely to foment disorder, a ban on all street gatherings, and a reduction in operating hours for a number of individual bars and public houses.⁴³⁸ In response to the Directorate's request, two companies of infantry from the Infantry Regiment Nr. 3, stationed with the Opava/Troppau garrison, and two squadrons of cavalry from the Ulan Regiment Nr. 3 in

⁴³³"Große Ausschreitungen im Mährisch-Ostrauer Kohlenrevier," *Reichspost*, July 23rd, 1914, Morgenblatt. 7.

⁴³⁴Ibid.; ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 539/Demonstrationen und Exzesse.

⁴³⁵"Die gestrigen Zusammenstöße in Marienberg," *Reichspost*, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt. 7.

⁴³⁶ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 539/Demonstrationen und Exzesse.

⁴³⁷This is not to say that simple hooliganism played no role. In Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, for example, members of the crowd destroyed a wooden sign belonging to one Josef Reich and three decorative flowerpots outside of an administrative building for no apparent reason. ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/Jul. 24, 1914/Pr. 539/Demonstrationen und Exzesse.

⁴³⁸"Strenge Massnahmen im Ostrau-Karwiner Kohlenrevier," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

Bílsko/Bielitz arrived in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau to reinforce the police and gendarmes in the district.⁴³⁹ Their arrival was to be fortuitous.

Dr. Bohumil Kunz, the head of the Imperial-Royal Police Commissariat for the industrial district, issued a decree on the 23rd of July following the episode of mob violence on the borders of Vítkovice/Witkowitz aimed at curtailing the violence. As "these recently begun national demonstrations have taken on a violent character through the transgressions of half-grown youths and shadowy elements...not only has others' property been destroyed, but also acts of violence have been committed against complete bystanders and against persons in authority [*obrigkeitliche Personen*]." ⁴⁴⁰ The increasing destructiveness of the violence and its expansion to the property and persons of both innocent bystanders as well as to representatives of state authority warranted sharper legal measures. This decree thus imposed three ordinances. First, all street gatherings were strictly forbidden after nightfall. Second, persons committing acts of violence, destroying property, or inciting riot were to be handled with the greatest of severity. Third, householders (*Hausväter*) were ordered to keep their boarders inside after dusk, especially the youths.⁴⁴¹ This last was in essence a form of curfew enforced by house arrest, likely modelled after the similar measure imposed in Vítkovice/Witkowitz the previous day. Finally, Kunz threatened rioters with prison sentences of one to four weeks if they were to fail to disperse if so ordered by an official or watchman.⁴⁴²

Despite these measures, a Czech-national crowd began to collect that evening (the 23rd) in

⁴³⁹"Neuerliche czechische Exzesse in Marienberg," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4. The center of gravity for nationalist violence had clearly shifted away from German-dominated Silesia and towards Ostravsko, the center for Czech-nationalist agitation in northeastern Moravia and Silesia, justifying the troop transfers.

⁴⁴⁰"Strenge Verfügungen der staatlichen Polizei," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁴¹"Strenge Verfügungen der staatlichen Polizei," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁴²"Strenge Verfügungen der staatlichen Polizei," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

front of the hotel "The Bowl," (*zur Kugel*) in the main square of Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, quickly swelling to "many thousands of demonstrators."⁴⁴³ The crowd quickly turned threatening, and the nearby German-language Rosenegger kindergarten building offered a concrete target. A hail of stones thrown from the crowd against the kindergarten prompted immediate gendarme and military intervention to clear the square, and the crowd swiftly turned to showering the security personnel with the verbal abuse and thrown stones previously aimed at the kindergarten. Numerous gendarmes were reportedly wounded by the stones, and the arrest and detainment of various perpetrators (*Exzedenten*) brought about loud threats to storm the building in which these arrestees were detained.⁴⁴⁴

The gendarmes launched a bayonet charge in an attempt to clear the crowd, which, though without having much effect on the crowd, did prompt an unknown gunman to fire upon the gendarmes from the crowd. The gendarme line then fired into the crowd, injuring large numbers of demonstrators. At this point, the two companies of infantry present advanced on the crowd at the double with leveled bayonets, injuring two rioters and forcing the crowd apart and away from the center of the square. Previously-positioned troops blocked attempts by elements of the crowd to move into Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau or Vítkovice/Witkowitz, and slightly before midnight the Habsburg infantry eventually succeeded in completely dispersing the crowd.⁴⁴⁵ Following this incident, industrial sites and mine shafts were placed under armed guard and two infantry garrisons were placed in Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, ninety men in the German school building and twenty-six men in the State Hotel Ostrava/Ostrau.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³"Neuerliche czechische Exzesse in Marienberg," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁴⁴"Neuerliche czechische Exzesse in Marienberg," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁴⁵"Neuerliche czechische Exzesse in Marienberg," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁴⁶"Neuerliche czechische Exzesse in Marienberg," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

The intensification of ethno-nationalist violence on display in the main square of Mariánské Hory/Marienberg consequently intensified the danger to public order in the district and propelled a request for additional military support. Upon receipt of the Imperial-Royal Police Directorate's request, the State Presidium in Opava/Troppau immediately requested that two battalions of infantry from the garrison at Olomouc/Olmütz be dispatched to the industrial district in order to reinforce the security personnel already there.⁴⁴⁷ The State Presidium also issued a further request to Military Command Kraków to send sufficient forces to maintain public order, though those forces were not to arrive until the following day.⁴⁴⁸

As ethno-nationalist violence remained ongoing, various local actors expressed their own perspectives on the implications of the violence. A letter from the managers of the leading men of industry in Petřvald/Peterswald, for example, reached the Imperial-Royal Police Directorate on the 22nd of July. Representing the *Österreichische Berg- und Hüttenwerks-Gesellschaft* (Albrechtsschacht), the *Ostrau-Karwiner Montangesellschaft*, and the *Erste österreichische Zinkfarben-Fabrik*, the signatories related plans for a Czech-national demonstrative procession in Petřvald/Peterswald, to be carried out by the Czech population of the municipality and its surroundings. This news struck the signatories as ominous not only because of the increasing levels of street violence present in Petřvald/Peterswald at the time but also because of the rumor that the aim of the procession was the demolition of the German-language schools in the municipality. Their unease, they wrote, was not only on their own behalf "but also on behalf of the German industrial concerns entrusted to our protection."⁴⁴⁹ The German-ness of factories is of

⁴⁴⁷"Militärverstärkung nach Mährisch-Ostrau," *Prager Tagblatt*, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt.

⁴⁴⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5. "Telegramm." July 23rd, 1914.

⁴⁴⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 539/3/Jul. 22, 1914/Pr. 539/Geehrtes k.k. Polizei-Kommissariat Mährisch-Ostrau

course debatable, but the widespread identification of at a minimum the mining and heavy industrial manufacturing industries in Ostravsko with the broader claims of the German-nationalist political project lends weight to their request for "sufficient protection for the property entrusted to [them] and to provide for the complete maintenance of discipline and order."⁴⁵⁰

A German-nationalist protest gathering also took place in Opava/Troppau on the evening of the 22nd of July, in the common area of the Three Hens, a local public house. This meeting, held under the auspices of the German-Political Workers Organization (*Deutschpolitischen Arbeiterverein*) and chaired by the mayor, Walther Kudlich, to protest what they characterized as "the Czech resistance festival in Katharein and the continuing Czech incursions on German territory..."⁴⁵¹ More than four thousand people reportedly attended, overflowing the venue. Addressing the crowd was the chairman of the German People's Union for Silesia, the State Parliament member Neuster, and like his counterparts in the Czech-national movement his speech attacked both his ethno-national enemy (the Czechs specifically and Slavs more generally) and the Silesian state administration.

His portrayal of Czech-national activity was much as one would expect. The Czech-national "invasion of Katharein...represents a provocation of Germans and has disturbed the peace between Germans and Czechs for the foreseeable future."⁴⁵² In a continuation that drew a storm of applause from those gathered, Neuster continued: "Let it be said to the Czechs, however, that we will not allow ourselves to be intimidated, and that we are always prepared to defend German rights and property [*Besitzstand*] with all possible means, including the most

⁴⁵⁰Ibid.

⁴⁵¹"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁵²"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

extreme."⁴⁵³ Beyond the notable (though certainly not unique) invocation of the threat of violence, the rhetoric Neuster used here is hardly atypical.

More interesting, though, were his attacks on the Silesian state government. His first bone of contention was that the state government had issued a permit for the Czech-national festival in Kateřinky/Katharein in the first place. Beyond that, the security precautions at the festival site led to the German-national protesters being confined away from the festival for almost an hour and guarded in a way that he characterized as provocative and threatening.⁴⁵⁴ These two acts are the only two specific concrete actions which Neuster addresses at all. He says nothing at all about the German-national riot in Opava/Troppau on the 12th of July which had earned the day the sobriquet of Bloody Sunday.

Neuster levelled serious charges against the government despite the apparently innocuous nature of these actions. He accused "the government of a one-sided taking of position to the benefit of the Czechs, who [the state government] protected by means of the Gendarmerie and the military," of "the dissipation of state funds," and "finally of the willful circumscription of the personal liberty of the German festival guests."⁴⁵⁵ For these actions he named as primarily responsible Court Councillor Karl Roth, the deputy State President, who "vainly attempts...to pass off responsibility for the unprecedented treatment of the German bourgeoisie to subordinate organs."⁴⁵⁶ Roth had previously been accused of being a secret financial backer of German-

⁴⁵³"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁵⁴"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁵⁵"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4. It is unclear what he meant by dissipation of state funds.

⁴⁵⁶"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

nationalist groups, as evidenced by his supposedly anti-Czech activities relating to the violence on Bloody Sunday.⁴⁵⁷

As a consequence of these crimes and offenses, Neuster continued: "in view of such a government position, the question must be thrown out, whether the Germans henceforth can render allegiance to [the government], and it is high time to settle accounts with the government."⁴⁵⁸ Concretely, he called upon "the German *Reichsrat* delegates to do their duty and finally radicalize their politics. The responsibility of the German delegates is not to enact an Austrian state politics [*österreichische Staatspolitik*] but instead to enact a German people's politics [*deutsche Volkspolitik*]."⁴⁵⁹ Neuster was thus calling not only for a change of policy at the Silesian state level, but a wholesale reorientation of Habsburg policy away from the maintenance of the Monarchy as a viable great power and towards the construction of a state explicitly run by and for ethnic Germans. If this was not done (and it could not, of course, be done) he implicitly threatened treason and insurrection.

The city council for Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, the site of several large-scale riots, provided a different perspective on the events of recent days. Convening on the 24th of July, the council "resolved in the interest of the good repute of our city and the honor of our Czech inhabitants to protest resolutely against the manner of the intervention of the Imperial-Royal Police Commissariat in Moravian Ostrava..."⁴⁶⁰ In their view, it was the "unprecedented violence

⁴⁵⁷AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Jul. 18, 1914/57/1/Po opavském pogromu.

⁴⁵⁸"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁵⁹"Eine deutsche Protestversammlung gegen die czechischen Provokationen," *Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁴⁶⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 551/Jul. 24, 1914/Zl. 6997/Starostenský úřad města mariánských hor. *Městské zastupitelstvo...usneslo se v zájmu dobré pověsti našeho města a cti českého našeho obyvatelstva protestovati co nejrozhodněji proti způsobu, jakým zakročeno bylo c.k. policejním komisařstvím v Mor. Ostravě...*

such as the Germans permit towards the Czech minority in Vienna, as well as the recent bloody acts of violence towards Czechs in Brno, Opava, and Vítkovice, suffered most deeply by the Czech people and the inhabitants of our city" that ought frame the riots in Mariánské Hory/Marienberg and Vítkovice/Witkowitz.⁴⁶¹ Further, if peace and order were the aim, then state officials must fulfill their (undefined) duties with regards to the Czechs and the Germans. The council did not view the local or state authorities as having succeeded in sufficiently protecting or guaranteeing Czech political rights and personal safety, in the Czech lands or elsewhere. In this telling, the lack of a "timely and energetic intervention against German violence in Opava and Vítkovice" was responsible for the violence, as the Czech-nationalist unrest was merely an unavoidable response to German-nationalist provocation.⁴⁶²

The actions of the police during the entire episode were, in the view of the city council, entirely execrable. Far from being a neutral body keeping the peace in the public interest, they saw "the gendarmes and the entire official police apparatus" as putting on a gruesome play to divert and occupy the public, their audience.⁴⁶³ Indeed, "one of the main causes of the mob and the consequent occurrences was the flamboyant arrival of the gendarmes without public resistance" followed by the Police Directorate's decision to summon reinforcements from the Vítkovice/Witkowitz municipal police, a "foolhardy action of the I.R. Police Headquarters..." as the municipal police's "merciless and unprecedented actions on Sunday the 19th of July in Vítkovice was the cause of further demonstrations."⁴⁶⁴ Police provocation, unfair and

⁴⁶¹Ibid. ...*bezpříkladné násilí, jakého dopouští Němci vůči českým menšinám ve Vídni, zvláště pak poslední krvavé násilnosti vůči Čechům v Brně, Opavě a Vítkovicích, roztrpčily do nehlubší míry český lid a obyvatelstvo našeho města...*

⁴⁶²Ibid. ...*Včasným a energickým zakročením proti německým násilnostem v Opavě a Vítkovicích mohly se tyto zameziti...že jí demonstrační projevy přímo byly vyvolány.*

⁴⁶³Ibid. ...*četnictva a celým úřednickým policejním aparátem...*

⁴⁶⁴Ibid. ...*že jednou z hlavních příčin shluku a dalších událostí, bylo bez odporu veřejné a okázale vystoupení*

particularist public policy, and German-nationalist propaganda, then, was from this perspective responsible for the unrest. In any case the depiction of events in the newspapers were lies which would be supplanted in the fulness of time by the reports of municipal officials.⁴⁶⁵

Without engaging the broader claims of persecution at the hands of a regional and federal government dominated by German nationalists or Czech nationalists, these claims are illustrative. First and most obviously these claims testify to a shared political culture and style. Events were understood and responded to through the lens of mutually antagonistic ethno-nationalisms which invited escalation, rhetorical and otherwise, and linked together disparate events, movements, and populations into a convenient narrative. In many ways these narratives aimed at manipulating public opinion on the one hand and government action on the other, and thus to a certain extent representations of events rather than the events themselves were important. The various rhetorical responses to the increasing ethno-nationalist violence also highlight the wider significance of this violence by connecting imperial politics with municipal events and vice-versa.

Second, these narratives had causative power in generating a cycle of violence. The events of 'Bloody Sunday' in Opava/Troppau drew on long-standing narratives of Germanness under threat from aggressive and hostile Czech hordes sympathizing with the Monarchy's enemies to justify and motivate the German-nationalist crowd as well as to prime the crowd for violence, though there is no clear evidence that violence was planned or intended.⁴⁶⁶ This outbreak of mob violence, though, then generated further demonstrations which themselves

řetnictva a pak nepředložené jednání c.k. policejního komisařství, které telefonický povolalo na pomoc jízdní policii z Vítkovic, která svým bezohledným a bezpříkladným jednáním v neděli dne 19. t.m. ve Vítkovicích byla původcem dalších demonstrací.

⁴⁶⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶⁶It is very likely that violence was anticipated, given the nature of crowds and prior experience; my claim is limited solely to the outbreak of violence not being intentionally arranged.

degenerated into violence. Public mobilization, like demographics or language use, signalled political strength and thus whenever possible competing ethno-nationalists put together counter-protests to demonstrate the strength of their own faction and to check their opponents' momentum. This process was iterative and thus especially threatening from a policing standpoint.

Third, the various organs of state security occupied something of an ambiguous position in both administrative and political arenas. The municipal police forces, in Ostravsko as elsewhere, were most vulnerable to particularist pressures. Largely recruited from the area in which they worked, these personnel remained embedded in networks of local concerns and relationships. More, their employers in the municipal government were themselves also necessarily responsive to both public opinion and local centers of power such as the Vítkovice/Witkowitz Directorate. Municipal governments were elected by and accountable to the inhabitants of their municipality, as well as being directly responsible for the employment of local watch or police personnel.⁴⁶⁷ Though the Vítkovice/Witkowitz municipal police were

⁴⁶⁷Cisleithanian administration operated on a 'dual track' principle (*Doppelgeleisigkeit*) in which self-governing bodies co-existed with appointed organs of the central government who represented the executive authority of the Emperor. At the state level, the Silesian State President (*Landespräsident*) represented the Emperor as his appointee, while the Silesian Parliament (*Landtag*) was elected as the head of the crownland's self-government. At the district level, the District Commissariat (*Bezirkshauptmannschaft*) headed by a District Commissioner (*Bezirkshauptmann*) appointed by the Minister of the Interior in Vienna represented the executive in the area entrusted to him, containing a number of municipalities. At the lowest level, municipalities (*Gemeinde*) elected a municipal committee (*Gemeindeausschuss*) every three years. These committees exercised the legislative function and selected the mayor (*Bürgermeister*), who exercised the executive power in the municipality. The municipalities were empowered to hire personnel to carry out their duties, such as exercising the local police power, and these personnel were directly answerable to the mayor. The District Commissioner was empowered to supervise municipal police forces and if necessary to command them directly, but he neither selected nor employed them. See: Jiří Klabouch, "Die Lokalverwaltung in Cisleithanien," 286-288, in: Adam Wandruszka, Peter Urbanitsch, eds. *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848-1918. Bd. II: Verwaltung und Rechtswesen* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975) 270-305.

something of an outlier, being essentially security for the Steelworks rather than representatives of the public, this reflected the more general dominance the Directorate exercised over municipal affairs in Vítkovice/Witkowitz. These men were employed by and responsible to their community, which in many cases meant the particularist interests of the faction dominant in that municipality rather than broader interests.

The security organs of the central government were much more independent of local concerns. The Imperial-Royal Police Directorate was responsible to the District Commissioner and above him to the State President and ultimately the Emperor. Its personnel were appointed rather than elected. Further, these appointees, like much of the Habsburg bureaucracy, rotated between different crownlands and were expected to be loyal not to their neighbors but to their duty. The gendarmes were likewise recruited from all over the Monarchy, and answered not to locally elected bodies but to the District Commissariat and ultimately to the Ministry of the Interior.⁴⁶⁸ This allowed a degree of independence and objectivity in dealing with local unrest, though not necessarily immunity to broader Monarchy-wide currents. In the same incident which the Mayor of Mariánské Hory/Marienberg bemoaned, for example, the Mayor of Vítkovice/Witkowitz in a separate communication placed much of the responsibility for worsening the situation on "the tactless behavior of some of the assigned gendarmes."⁴⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the gendarmes and the I-R Police Directorate generally offered a useful counterbalance to particularist power and served as a useful mediator to keep political disputes

⁴⁶⁸The Habsburg Gendarmerie, unlike other such bodies, was part of the Habsburg military and its members were appointed from soldiers in the regular army. Gendarmes were assigned to one of fourteen State Gendarme Commands (*Landesgendarmeriekommandos*), regiment-size commands each responsible for a particular area of the Monarchy. After 1876, gendarmes were administratively subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior for their role in maintaining internal order, though the Ministry of War was responsible for administrative and disciplinary matters. See: Clive Emsley, Sabine Phillips, "The Habsburg Gendarmerie: A Research Agenda," *German History* 17 (1999) 241-250; Clive Emsley, *Gendarmes and the State in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 223-235.

⁴⁶⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 551/Jul. 20, 1914/Zl. 13260/Pr. 528/Stadt-Vorstand Witkowitz.

within boundaries sufficient to allow life to continue normally. In the ethno-nationalist violence sweeping Ostravsko, though, the gendarmes, the police, and the Habsburg military units seconded as *Assistenz* were besieged on all sides. Intervention on behalf of public order meant intervention against ethnically associated rioters and protection of ethnically associated symbolic sites, and rather than demonstrating impartiality acting against both Czech-national and German-national violence simply brought the ire of both political groupings on the heads of the security organs. Beyond ire, intervention also brought stones, clubs, and gunfire down upon the heads of the embattled gendarmes and police.⁴⁷⁰ The sheer quantity of violence directed against representatives of the state significantly contributed to a growing sense of crisis and ungovernability in Ostravsko.

The Police Directorate's difficulties maintaining public order in Ostravsko were increased by a simultaneous though largely unrelated episode of worker unrest among the mining communities in the area. The umbrella organization for miners in the Ostrava-Karviná district, the Miner's Society (*Bergbaugenossenschaft*), was operated on behalf of the state to administer various elements of the Cisleithanian welfare state, such as it was. Among its activities was the management of various legislatively created relief and pension funds, paid for by wage withholdings, and in July the Miner's Society issued an increase in this withholding of 32 hellers per worker per paycheck, with the funds collected by the Miner's Society.⁴⁷¹ This deduction aimed at funding the renovation of an infirmary to be used for the benefit of ill or injured members of the Society.⁴⁷² Regardless of the ultimate beneficiaries of the measure, though, the

⁴⁷⁰I have, however, not found any instances of serious resistance being offered to Habsburg Army units.

⁴⁷¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 535/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 535/Meldung.

⁴⁷²“Drohender Bergarbeiterstreik,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt.

wage withholding was immensely unpopular. With the median mine worker receiving a gross wage of between four and five crowns per shift, this deduction represented a reduction of between six to eight percent in their take home pay.⁴⁷³

In consequence of this meaningful reduction in wages, a number of mines underwent spontaneous demonstrative protest strikes on the 22nd of July. These strikes thus began ten days after Bloody Sunday and in the middle of the enormous ethno-nationalist disturbances that had begun several days earlier and would continue through the 25th. The afternoon shift at the Eleanora shaft in Dombrau/Dombrová experienced a walkout rate of over ninety percent, with only twenty-two of the two hundred and thirty-four men assigned entering the mine, while the Bettina shaft (also in Dombrau/Dombrová) had only sixteen of two hundred and sixty one workers begin the shift.⁴⁷⁴ This walkout spread to the two shafts in Poremba, where the next day (July 23rd) the early shifts went entirely missing when the time came to enter the mine.⁴⁷⁵ Over the course of the 23rd, walkouts spread to Karvín/Karwin, where the afternoon shifts of the Gabriela and Austria shafts operated by the Österreichische Berg- und Hüttengewerkschaft, almost seven hundred men, went on strike in protest of the wage withholding.⁴⁷⁶

In total over five thousand miners spread over seven mines went on strike, around fifteen percent of the district's workforce. The unrest was such that a general strike involving the entirety of the coal district was a serious possibility.⁴⁷⁷ The Vítkovice Directorate stemmed the

⁴⁷³For mining wages, see AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Oct. 14, 1914/Nr. 41/3/Výkaz havířských výdělků v ostrav. karvinském revíru od 20. června do 4. července 1914; ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 541/Jul. 28, 1914/Pr. 541/Nr. 1174/Bergarbeiterstreik am Gabrielenschachte in Karwin.

⁴⁷⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 535/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 535/Meldung.

⁴⁷⁵Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 541/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 541/Bergarbeiterstreik; ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 545/Jul. 23, 1914/Pr. 543/Bergarbeiterstreik. 500 men at Gabriela, and around 200 men at Austria.

⁴⁷⁷“Drohender Bergarbeiterstreik,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt.

expansion of the unrest into the Vítkovice workforce by decreeing that “any worker taking part in demonstrations of any kind may expect immediate termination,” but mine management at the other major industrial concerns in the district shied away from similar measures.⁴⁷⁸ Whether this was out of fear of consequences, inability to make such a threat real, or simply a rational evaluation that this episode would prove transient is as yet uncertain.

These walkouts in any case ended relatively rapidly. Being a spontaneous response to individual circumstances, these strikes lacked cohesive goals or organizational support. Strike activity remained passive, limited to walkouts and labor absenteeism, and never developed into a demonstrative or assertive movement. It may be that absent the flood of Habsburg troops into the area, well under way by the 25th, something of the sort may have developed. As matters stood, though, intervention on the part of the I-R District Mining Office quickly led to an agreement on the 25th to resume work as normal by Monday, the 27th of July.⁴⁷⁹ The early shifts at the Austria and Gabriela shafts, for example, resumed normal operations on the early shift of the 27th as scheduled.⁴⁸⁰

The various ethno-nationalist riots and the creeping atmosphere of siege in the district had quickly grown beyond the ability of the local authorities to handle. The local police and gendarme presence, even heavily reinforced from other areas and supported by two companies of infantry and two cavalry squadrons rushed from Silesia, had proven only barely equal to the task

⁴⁷⁸“Die Deutschfeindlichen Exzesse in Witkowitz und Ostrau,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt. This order applied to ethno-nationalist demonstrations as well.

⁴⁷⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 541/Jul. 25, 1914/Pr. 541/1/Bergarbeiterstreik am Gabrielschacht in Karwin.

⁴⁸⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 545/Jul. 27, 1914/Pr. 545/Arbeitseinstellung am Austriaschachte beendet; PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 541/Jul. 28, 1914/Pr. 541/Nr. 1174/Bergarbeiterstreik am Gabrielschachte in Karwin.

of suppressing the ethno-nationalist riots, and more unrest was expected. The *Prager Tagblatt* reported that the “police and Gendarmerie were no longer capable of maintaining order”.⁴⁸¹ Thankfully for the authorities, that evening the assisting force (*Assistenz*) sent from Kraków arrived. Military Command Kraków had dispatched nine companies of infantry, two machine gun detachments, and two squadrons of cavalry from the Imperial and Royal 1st Corps, under the command of Major-General von Zaleski.⁴⁸² This was a force of approximately two thousand infantrymen, six hundred cavalry troopers, and four machine guns.⁴⁸³ These men were met by a “throng of many thousands, which greeted the military with derisive taunts”.⁴⁸⁴

The next day, the War Minister ordered von Zaleski's detachment to stand ready to enforce a State of Emergency in the industrial region centered on Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau.⁴⁸⁵ The Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff, Conrad von Hötzendorf, was, however, not consulted. Informed, he wrote, through reading his morning newspaper, that elements of the 1st Corps were being used to suppress unrest, he demanded the substitution of a detachment from the 2nd Corps, as the 1st Corps were to be trusted with an important role in case of war with Russia.⁴⁸⁶ More likely, though, was that the predominantly Polish men of the Kraków-based 1st Corps were considered less effective in suppressing their co-nationals than the German soldiers

⁴⁸¹“Militärverstärkung nach Mährisch-Ostrau,” *Prager Tagblatt*, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt.

⁴⁸²ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5. "Telegramm." July 23rd, 1914. Kraków estimated that more men were needed, but the harvest represented an obstacle to immediate deployment of more manpower, as much of the Austro-Hungarian Army's manpower was released on 'Harvest Leave' during the harvesting season in order to facilitate crop gathering.

⁴⁸³For troop strengths of various formations, see István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). 15.

⁴⁸⁴“Verstärkung des Militärs in Mährisch-Ostrau,” *Die Neue Freie Presse*, July 24th, 1914, Morgenblatt. 8.

⁴⁸⁵ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5(5256). "Assistenzbeistellung." July 23rd, 1914.

⁴⁸⁶ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5(6214). "Unruhen in Witkowitz; Ablösung der Truppen des 1. Kps." July 24th, 1914.

of the 2nd Corps, recruited from Vienna and Upper and Lower Austria.⁴⁸⁷ The highest levels of the Austrian governmental and military establishments, then, deemed it vitally necessary that there be sufficient armed force available in Ostravsko to ensure public order.

The spiraling crisis with Serbia cast its shadow over the Ostrava-Karviná basin as well, and in this light the widespread unrest took on a new and even more threatening aspect. The Ministry of Home Defense and the Ministry of the Interior, in a dispatch to the Imperial and Royal War Ministry in Vienna, expressed their conviction that even a partial mobilization order would meet widespread resistance and enforcement thereof would require not only the full strength of the local police forces, already stretched to their limit and beyond by the escalating civil and labor unrest, but also the immediate deployment of all available military personnel. The military was further to be deployed at the latest by Sunday, July 26th, if the unrest was not yet under control.⁴⁸⁸

Consequently, the War Ministry ordered the immediate deployment of von Zaleski's troops on the 25th of July – three days before the declaration of war on Serbia began the First World War.⁴⁸⁹ This show of force in Ostravsko sufficed to quell the unrest, as the Ministry of the Interior reported that the riots were “already ebbing away.”⁴⁹⁰ The concluding report on the tidal wave of ethno-nationalist violence that had crashed over Ostravsko offered the Interior Ministry's view that “the already-prepared extraordinary measures, to come into effect on declaration of mobilization and under which civilians shall be placed under military justice, ought suffice to

⁴⁸⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5(Präs. 4262-XX). "Abschrift." July 24th, 1914.

⁴⁸⁹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5. "Einziehung beigestellter Assistenzen im Industriegebiete Mähr. Ostrau." July 25th, 1914.

⁴⁹⁰ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1914, Abt. 5. Carton 1, Nr. 3/5. "Bericht." Abt. 10, July 25th, 1914.

ensure peace and order even after the departure of the troops.”⁴⁹¹ The extraordinary measures referenced were a novel and wide-ranging subordination of the Habsburg subject to the disciplinary power of the state, a more complete treatment of which follows shortly. Aimed at ensuring internal security, order, and productivity in war-time, these measures were not limited solely to the factory workers and miners who produced so much of the Monarchy's critical war materiel but affected virtually every aspect of life in the Monarchy.

The Ministries' fears of unrest and resistance in response to a mobilization order were likely overblown. Even the most strident voices in the Czech-national movement made no statements that could be construed as supporting resistance to state authority.⁴⁹² While certainly incidents of mob violence had occurred and had involved clashes with the police the purpose of the demonstrations were only incidentally connected with those clashes. The Mayor of Mariánské Hory/Marienberg went out of his way to reassure the I-R Police Directorate that "in no case is it necessary to be alarmed regarding the peaceful and loyal inhabitants of our city or the military."⁴⁹³ Further, insofar as the aims of the Czech-national agitation following 'Bloody Sunday' connected with the Habsburg state they envisioned *more* state power rather than less. The federalization of the municipal police was, in their view, the best way to prevent the arbitrary exercise of police power against Czech-national interests and represented a way to reduce the power of the purportedly anti-Czech local and state (*zemský*) government officials.

The continuing diplomatic crisis following the assassination of Franz Ferdinand was also a much less salient issue among the district's workforce than it was among political and military

⁴⁹¹Ibid.

⁴⁹²Though this was not true of the German-national movement, I have not found any evidence that potential German-nationalist resistance to state authority was of concern to anyone either locally in Ostravsko or in Vienna.

⁴⁹³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 551/Jul. 24, 1914/Zl. 6997/Starostenský úřad města mariánských hor. That such a reassurance was felt to be necessary may be taken as a sign of the broader worsening of relations in the years leading up to 1914.

elites in Vienna.⁴⁹⁴ Franz Ferdinand's general unpopularity, the lack of any apparent movement on the issue for weeks at a time, and the distraction of much more pressing local concerns meant that the prospect of war took up very little space in the public imagination in Ostravsko before mobilization began. No figures or movements agitated against military service or mobilization as many did against German-nationalist or Czech-nationalist figures, symbols, and activities.

Nevertheless, the potential for uncontrolled or hostile action among the general population of the district was taken quite seriously in responsible circles in Opava/Troppau and Vienna. Pan-Slavic solidarity with Serbian-nationalist activists in the area undoubtedly played some role in these concerns, as did the General Staff's generalized suspicion of the Slavic populations of the Monarchy. The War Ministry in particular took concerns about resistance during mobilization very seriously. Previous experience with mobilization during war scares in 1908 and 1912, during the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and at the time of the First Balkan War, had cast a harsh light on the reliability of Slavic units in general and Czech units in particular. During the partial mobilization in 1912, for instance, the Bohemian 8th Dragoons Regiment experienced a serious mutiny upon being ordered to Galicia, while the Ruthenian 6th Infantry Regiment saw a serious breakdown in discipline and a Croatian lieutenant defected to Montenegro. Other incidents had also occurred in the 16th and 18th Infantry Regiments and the 36th Dragoons.⁴⁹⁵ The main driver of these concerns, though, was certainly the volcano of ethno-nationalist violence which had swept the district in the second half of July.

⁴⁹⁴Essentially local concerns dominated both press conversations and political gatherings until the German declarations of war against Russia and France gave notice that the Serbian adventure would not go as planned. Indeed, it seems that until the end of July following the actual declaration of war on Serbia the possibility of an actual great power war was not taken particularly seriously in Ostravsko. See for instance AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Jul. 29, 1914/60/1/Slovo v těžké chvíli.

⁴⁹⁵ÖstA/KA/MKFF/1913/14-1/6-5; ÖstA/KA/MKSM/1914/57-3/1; ÖstA/KA/MKSM/1912/69-2962; ÖstA/KA/MKFF/1912/Mb/11/27; Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung, *Österreich-Ungarns Letzter Krieg*. 7 vols. (Vienna: 1929-35). 1:41. Cited in: Gunther Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1976) 170.

Whether or not these concerns were justified, the Austro-Hungarian government had demonstrated both the willingness and the ability to exert large-scale military force against civil and labor unrest in the interests of securing public order and assuring the area's compliance, even at the very beginning of the First World War. The prompt application of military force ensured that mobilization unfurled as planned, though it may have been unnecessary in Ostrava-Karviná as it was unnecessary in most other areas of the Bohemian lands. As the First World War began, though, the Habsburg government immediately moved to intensify and routinize a much broader conception of militarized enforcement of state authority

This process of subordination and discipline began on the 25th of July, as General von Zaleski's show of force was restoring public order in Ostrava-Karviná. The Habsburg ultimatum to Serbia regarding cooperation and assistance in the search for those responsible for Franz Ferdinand's assassination fell due that day, and the Serbian refusal to accept the ultimatum in its entirety meant war. Indeed, the Serbian mobilization began hours before their answer was delivered to the Habsburg representative in Belgrade.⁴⁹⁶

The Habsburg military, however, displayed no such urgency. Despite widespread expectations of a coming war with Serbia and even despite the fact that the aim of the Serbian ultimatum was to provoke a war in which the Monarchy could punish Serbia for its sins, the

⁴⁹⁶Manfried Rauchensteiner, *Der Tod des Doppeladlers* (Graz: Verlag Styria, 1993) 85.

General Staff made no preparations for mobilization until the 23rd of July, when the Army Corps earmarked for the invasion of Serbia were ordered to break off their current activities and concentrate in their assigned garrisons by the 25th.⁴⁹⁷ The Emperor signed his initial mobilization order for *Kriegsfall Balkan*, the war plan for a limited war with Serbia, on the evening of the 25th, though the announcement did not go out until the following Monday, the 27th of July.⁴⁹⁸ Emperor Francis Joseph signed the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on the evening of the 27th as well.⁴⁹⁹ The Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia, delivered on the 28th of July, was of course meant as a punitive measure aimed primarily at reducing the threat of Serbian irredentism and the consequent and increasingly organized (though still intermittent) campaign of espionage and terror against Habsburg rule in Bosnia.⁵⁰⁰

Despite the escalating street conflicts and demonstrations leading up to the outbreak of the First World War, ethno-nationalist violence almost entirely disappeared from the scene following the announcement of mobilization. Several accounts held that the beginning of the war heralded a kind of "peace of the siege" (*Bürgerfrieden*) in the Ostrava-Karviná district – a police councilor reported that Germans and Slavs “collectively poured out into the streets and broke out into patriotic songs. Terrified, the subversive elements shrunk away.”⁵⁰¹ However, these subversive and Russophile elements in the industrial district, he continued, “can not be dismissed. The majority thereof are the radical Czechs...in relation to the remaining population

⁴⁹⁷Ibid., 89.

⁴⁹⁸Ibid., 90-91.

⁴⁹⁹Ibid., 91.

⁵⁰⁰Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Penguin, 2012) 3-64; 367-403.

⁵⁰¹Státní Ústřední Archiv v Praze, *Sborník dokumentů* 1:137-138. Police Councillor's Report, November 3rd, 1914. 139-140.

they are a tiny minority”.⁵⁰² A perhaps less optimistic though certainly more accurate account characterized the beginning of the war as putting nationality conflicts on hold, though antagonisms continued to bubble under the surface.⁵⁰³

A number of factors likely contributed to this reduction in ethno-nationalist violence. First and most obviously the presence of large numbers of armed men tasked to restore and maintain public order. A mob throwing stones at a small Gendarme detachment was one thing, but throwing stones at an infantry regiment was quite another. Vigorous enforcement of the Police Directorate's ban on provocative celebrations or gatherings and street gatherings more generally, along with the closure or reduction in hours of liquor service establishments, likely reduced both possibility and motive for mob violence. The warning that violent demonstrators would be suppressed by any means necessary up to and including deadly force dramatically increased the risks for mob violence as well.⁵⁰⁴

Beyond these typical measures, though, were the upheavals and difficulties caused by mobilization. Many of those most likely to participate in mob violence, nationalist or otherwise, were called to the colors. Even those who remained faced wide restrictions on rights of assembly and speech and much harsher labor discipline. Even transport faced widespread bottlenecks, with military transport of personnel and material taking absolute priority over civilian use.⁵⁰⁵ As a consequence, concentrating a sufficient number of demonstrators from across the district into one area became a virtually impossible task.

Finally, and I think most importantly, the outbreak of the war changed the character and

⁵⁰²Státní Ústřední Archiv v Praze, *Sborník dokumentů* 1:137-138. Police Councillor's Report, November 3rd, 1914. 139-140.

⁵⁰³*Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 202-203.

⁵⁰⁴"Strenge Maßnahmen im Ostrau-Karwiner Kohlenrevier," *Die Neue Freie Presse*, July 23rd, 1914. Abendblatt. 4.

⁵⁰⁵See for example AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/č. 31/8/Zastavení dopravy na drahách.

meaning of political engagement in Ostravsko. Previously, the Habsburg state had established the framework within which political contestation occurred and provided some of the benefits (tax preferences for monolingual schools, workplace regulations, and so on) for which different groups competed. The state, however, was not a political actor. Following the declaration of mobilization and subsequent state of war, though, this was no longer true. Beginning on July 25th, 1914, the Habsburg state disposed of a vital interest in not only the neutral maintenance of public order, as before, but in virtually every aspect of social and economic life. The scripts for political activity in Ostravsko had been suddenly and radically altered, and both activists and the general body of the population were forced to adjust to the new environment created by the war.

CHAPTER FOUR: ABSCHRECKUNG- UND BESSERUNGSMITTEL: THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR, 1914-1916

*Sto roků v šachtě žil, mlčel jsem
Sto roků kopal jsem uhlí,
Za sto let v rameni bezmasém
Svaly mi v železo ztuhly.*

*Uhelný prach sed mi do očí,
Rubíny ze rtů mi uhly,
Ze vlasů, z vousů a z obočí
Visí mi rampouchy uhlí.*

*Chléb s uhlím беру si do práce,
Z roboty jdu na robotu,
Při Dunaji strní paláce,
Z krve mé a z mého potu.*

*Sto roků v kopalně mlčel jsem,
Kdo mi těch sto roků vrátí?
Když jsem jim pohrozil kladivem,
Kdekdo se začal mi smáti.*

*Abych měl rozum, šel v kopalnu zas,
Pro pány dřel se jak prve -
Máchl jsem kladivem - teklo to v ráz
Na Polské Ostravě krve!*

*Všichni vy na Slezské, všichni vy, dím,
Nech je vám Petr neb Pavel,
Mějž prs kryt krunýřem ocelovým,
Tisícům k útoku zavel,*

*Všichni vy na Slezské, všichni vy, dím,
Hlubokých páni vy dolů,
Přijde den, z dolů jde plamen a dým,
Přijde den, zúčtujem spolu!
-Petr Bezruč, "Ostrava," 1909.*

*One hundred years in the shaft I lived, I kept silent
One hundred years I dug out coal,
After one hundred years in a meatless tributary
My muscles congealed to iron.*

*Coal dust seated into my eyes,
Rubies from my lips to me embers,
From my hair, from my beard, from my brows
Hang from me icicles of coal.*

*Bread with coal I bring with me to work
From drudgery I go to labor,
Along the Danube soar palaces,
From my blood and my sweat.*

*One hundred years I kept silent in the pit,
Who in these hundred years returns to me?
When I threaten them with my hammer,
All the world begins to mock me.*

*So that I have wisdom, I went in the pit again and again,
For the lords I toiled as before -
I swept with my hammer - it flowed in the swing
Blood in Polish Ostrava!*

*All of you in Silesia, all of you,
Let them be to you Petr or Pavel,
Have their chest covered with armor steel,
To thousands ordered on the attack,*

*All of you in Silesia, all of you,
You deep lords of the mines,
Come the day, from the mines comes smoke and flame,
Come the day, we will settle our accounts together!*

The outbreak of the war and consequent imposition of a wide range of emergency measures radically reshaped the political and social environment in the Ostrava-Karviná district. The transition between the state as arbiter and object of political activity to the state as tyrant exercising or claiming to exercise authority over virtually every area of life was a confused and confusing experience both for the administrators, officials, and armed men who enacted and administered state authority as well as for those men and women whom the state aimed to control. Dislocations brought about by the outbreak of the war itself conspired with information lags, changing policies, clashing jurisdictions, and old habits of thought to complicate the wrenching process of mobilizing Ostravsko for war.

The cataclysmic reordering of legal categories, rights, and practice brought about by Austria-Hungary's entry into the First World War, despite or perhaps because of its very radicality, caused deep confusion in Ostravsko. The working population of the district were not the only ones facing a new and confusing world with pressing demands, new stresses, and unclear or contradictory instructions. Even many of the administrators and bureaucrats charged with implementing new policies and procedures for wartime were themselves unclear on what these written policies meant in practice, and competing civil and military jurisdictions further complicated matters.

The first months of the war saw an enormous shift in the legal position of an inhabitant of the industrial district. Various legal categories overlapped various degrees of responsibility to military commands and subordination to military justice and military discipline. By the end of July, every person living in Ostravsko faced some degree of exposure to a military court martial. The economic life of the district faced abruptly changed circumstances which brought about widespread dislocations. Financial markets seized up, transportation networks were

commandeered for military use, and large numbers of industrial workers were drafted into the armed services to die in Galicia and Serbia. These dislocations brought much of the district's industry to a halt, and many thousands of workers suddenly faced unemployment or forced partial employment while specie disappeared into basements and under mattresses. The price of food and other necessary articles of consumption spiked, as panicked consumers rushed to stockpile food against the inflation that panic buying brought about. Organizational life was throttled by police repression, censorship began, and public political life came to an abrupt end.

The next year of war brought increasing inflation, increasing hunger, and increasing repression. Court-martials did a rollicking business in the death penalty and in long terms of hard labor. Upward pressures on wages were squashed by aggressive military and police repression, while upward pressures on food prices continued unabated. Price ceilings, industry food collectives (*Konsumvereine*), and finally rationing aimed to provide enough food for the demanding industrial work which made Ostravsko central to war production. At this they largely failed, and the standard of living in the district continued to sink. Small instances of unrest began to appear in response to poor treatment or increasing hunger.

In the Spring of 1916 the tenuous peace that had previously reigned in the district, a grey and hushed peace watched over by sentries with bayonets, came to an end. A spontaneous and unorganized strike wave swept the district in March and April of 1916 in response to unbearable conditions which evoked a brutal military response. This exercise of police and military violence suppressed the immediate threat but failed to offer any kind of positive program. The failure of coercion led haltingly towards a new approach towards mobilizing industrial labor in Ostravsko based on the provision of the basic necessities of life, a cooperative model of engagement rather than an adversarial model. However, the adversarial model of domestic rule, implemented under

the iron fists of Prime Minister Karl Stürgkh and head of the Army High Command (AOK) Conrad von Hötzendorf, was to remain in place until the pale hand of death brought a far-reaching revision of the basic orientation and methods of Cisleithanian war governance.

The Politics of Repression

The Militarization of Society

The mobilization order of July 25th, 1914 which set in train the outbreak of the war also triggered a wide range of pre-war measures aimed at smoothing the path of mobilization and supporting the armed forces during the war. A series of emergency measures thus came into effect beginning on the first day of mobilization. Based on the powers granted to the government under §20 of the Constitution, the cabinet suspended Articles 8, 9, 10, 12, and 13 of the Constitution and activated articles 3-7 of the Emergency Law of the 5th of May, 1869.⁵⁰⁶ In practice, this meant that Austrian civilians partially or totally lost their rights to personal freedom, security of the home, privacy of their letters, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press, as well as their right to a jury trial.⁵⁰⁷ The same day also saw an Imperial Decree (*kaiserliche Verordnung*) subordinating civilians to military justice for a wide range of crimes and misdemeanors in “territorial regions in which mobilization has been declared,” which in this case meant the entirety of Austria. The crimes transferred ranged from high treason and *lese majesté* to robbery, assault, murder, sabotage, interference with public officials, disturbing the peace, and rioting.⁵⁰⁸

These Monarchy-wide measures were not the only changes to impact the inhabitants of Ostravsko. On the 31st of July, 1914, the Emperor and his cabinet in Vienna issued a decree enabling a kind of military rule for Galicia, the Bukovina, most of western Silesia, and much of

⁵⁰⁶*Reichs-Gesetzblatt für das Kaiserthum Österreich* (Vienna: Kaiserl.-königl. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1869). XXXI. Stück, Nr. 66. 304.

⁵⁰⁷Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 18-19.

⁵⁰⁸*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). LXXI. Stück, Nr. 156. 821.

northeastern Moravia.⁵⁰⁹ In these areas, which practically speaking constituted the fighting front on the one hand and Ostravsko on the other, the Army High Command was given the right "for the protection of military interests in the realm of political administration to issue decrees, issue commands, and to compel obedience thereunto within the legal area of competence of the provincial head of government."⁵¹⁰ This meant in practice that the Army High Command could order whatever they liked in the areas subordinated to them under this decree, and that the only check on this power was the cabinet and Emperor's ability to override the acts of provincial governments. This countermanding power was, however, essentially never exercised.⁵¹¹

Beyond this expansion of political power, the beginning of the war also brought into being a territory marked as the Zone of Army Operations (*Bereich der Armee im Felde*). The extent of the area included in this Zone was, for reasons which are unclear, a military secret, but encompassed all the area subordinate to Military Command Kraków, which for our purposes can be treated as interchangeable with the territories affected by the Decree of July 31st, 1914.⁵¹² This territory, as a legal entity intended to represent the actual fighting front, was regulated solely with an eye towards military needs. Most saliently, the Army High Command disposed of the right to impose martial law, subordinating all persons civil and otherwise to military justice and military courts.⁵¹³ And soon after the war began, the Army High Command would begin to exercise this right in Ostravsko.

⁵⁰⁹*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). XCV. Stück, Nr. 186. 891.; AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na Zdar/Aug. 5, 1914/č. 31/8/Výjimečná opatření pro pohraniční země.

⁵¹⁰*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). XCV. Stück, Nr. 186. 891.

⁵¹¹At least by the Stürgkh government. The collapse of military influence marked by Emperor Karl's ascent to the throne will be treated in Chapter 5.

⁵¹²Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 22. Military Command Kraków was responsible for a somewhat larger proportion of Moravia than that area in which administrative power was ceded to the Army High Command.

⁵¹³Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 22.

The laboring population, though, was under even stricter control than the general population. The employees of any companies or concerns declared war production facilities were under Article Six of the law "obligated to remain in their current service or labor position until the situation of application ceases to apply".⁵¹⁴ Functionally, this meant that every single worker at these operations were under a legal obligation to remain at their position until the end of the war. A wide range of concerns in Ostravsko were quickly declared what was termed "protected by the state" (*podniky státem chráněné*). Among them were Anton Himmelbauer's oil refinery in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, the Electical Company's electrotechnical works in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, the Vítkovice Steelworks, Coal Mining Works (*kamenouhelné závody*), Coking Works, and Gasworks (*plýnárna*), all of the mining operations of the Emperor Ferdinand Company in Přívoz/Oderfurt, all of the Austrian Mining and Metalworks operations in Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, the municipal gasworks and waterworks in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau (the gasworks were operated by a separate limited liability corporation owned by the city), the municipal waterworks for Vítkovice/Witkowitz and Přívoz/Oderfurt, the small mining operations at the Hlubina, Louisa, Oder, and Ignat shafts as well as the coking works at Ignat.⁵¹⁵ In summary, most of the coal mining, steel working, coking, gas generation, and water distribution happening in Ostravsko was now a vital state interest and thus subject to military control. These also happened to be all of the important economic activities for the area.

Workers militarized under the War Production Law were further liable to military discipline and military justice during the fulfillment of their labor obligations when either employed by a concern militarized under the War Production Law or when directly answerable to

⁵¹⁴*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1912). XCIX. Stück, Nr. 236. 1192.

⁵¹⁵AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Nov. 14, 1914/101/2/Ostravsko v době válečné. These declarations were implemented following the 27th of August - see ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 682/Aug. 27, 1914/Pr. 682/Slavné c.k. policejní komisařství.

a military officer. Disobedience by such workers was a military crime and treated as such - only militarized workers employed at a civilian concern and unsupervised by military personnel were free of military discipline.⁵¹⁶ Despite most of these workers being liable to military discipline and justice while at work, though, they were and remained civilian workers despite the loss of many of their pre-war labor rights.⁵¹⁷

The various elements of the War Production Law were not well known to the general public, and the editors of *Na zdar* reprinted the text of the law on the 12th of August, 1914, as a service and reminder to their readers.⁵¹⁸ Though the new conditions to which workers employed at these concerns were subject spread informally as well as through announcements and placards, ignorance about the law remained. In one case, one Alois Schmied, employed at 17 as a mine laborer, failed to arrive at work on the morning of the 4th of August, 1914. Subsequently, a watch patrol arrived at his domicile and escorted him to the mine. Upon arrival, the youth slumped to the ground and declared that he simply could not work, as he had not yet eaten anything and was suffering from head pains. Arrested and conveyed to a military court, he remained in custody until his trial, on the 19th of October, 1914. Brought before the court, he confessed to being unaware of the situation in which he had found himself and that he had indeed been sworn in according to the War Production Law. However, the oath and related instructions were offered solely in the German language, and as Schmied understood only his native Slovak, he had no idea what the oath consisted of - he reportedly asked his neighbors afterwards "what was it that

⁵¹⁶Ferdinand Hanusch, Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927) 50.

⁵¹⁷Ferdinand Hanusch, Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927) 49.

⁵¹⁸AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 12, 1914/32/1-2/O válečných úkonech čili plněních.

the Lieutenant said?"⁵¹⁹ He was sentenced to six weeks of harsh imprisonment (*Tuhé vězení*).⁵²⁰

Many workers and miners in the Ostrava-Karviná district did not remain civilians. According to the Militia Law of the 6th of June, 1886, all males between the ages of nineteen and forty-three were liable to service in the militia in a time of war.⁵²¹ A further decree of the 20th of December, 1889, elaborated on this language, expressly allowing the use of militia conscripts in civilian industrial positions.⁵²² Article 19 of the Ministry for Home Defense Decree of the 27th of July, 1912, further explicitly allowed the use of mobilized militia laborers in all stages of arms production.⁵²³ Under Cisleithanian statute, every man liable to militia service was therefore liable to either service under arms with the army or in domestic security roles, or "provision of extraordinary services for war aims" (*besondere Dienstleistungen für Kriegszwecke*), which meant with very few limitations whatever the state told them to do.⁵²⁴ Such labor only had to be producing for the war effort, broadly defined.

Once sworn into the militia, these men could be directed into self-standing labor battalions for military construction purposes, or simply assigned to work in an existing company or concern, whether this company was under military administration or not.⁵²⁵ When militia workers were employed directly by the military (such as in labor battalions and the like) their

⁵¹⁹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 5, 1914/110/1-2/Horníci před vojenským soudem. *Co že to pan nadporučík povídal...?*

⁵²⁰AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 5, 1914/110/1-2/Horníci před vojenským soudem.

⁵²¹*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1886). XXXI. Stück, Nr. 90. 297-299.

⁵²²*Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 40-41.

⁵²³*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1912). LXIV. Stück, Nr. 153.708.

⁵²⁴Ferdinand Hanusch, Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927) 40.

⁵²⁵Ferdinand Hanusch, Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927) 41. The German term, *Betrieb*, signifies a broader category than any of its general English equivalents. To aid in maintaining precision, I typically translate it as 'concern'.

positions were essentially the same as those of soldiers. When employed at a civilian firm (whether or not that firm was being supervised by military organs), these militia workers experienced a peculiarly polite form of compulsory labor. While they could not leave their job, disobey their supervisors, engage in strike actions, or the like (such being military crimes), they also could not be fired, only reassigned by their military superiors. Further, all otherwise valid labor laws and regulations such as those regulating Sunday labor, working hours and conditions, and so on remained applicable, and the concern making use of the militiaman's labor was obligated to pay suitable wages.⁵²⁶ Nevertheless, militia workers were not civil persons and were obligated to follow all applicable articles of the Military Code of Justice (*Wehrgesetzbuch*) just as their comrades-in-arms were.⁵²⁷ Miners in particular very often became militia laborers - "[b]y the whole array of coal operations in Ostravsko there are miners, who were not summoned to military service, designated for military production with their own existing employers. They are required to swear the military oath, so their military obligations will be met in the mines."⁵²⁸

The position of Ostravsko industrial workers after the beginning of the First World War, then, was one of helpless subordination to the state, enforced by a legal regime which equated mine labor with military service and correspondingly equated protest or resistance to any measures aimed at increasing or rationalizing production to treason.⁵²⁹ Those workers younger than nineteen or older than forty-three and thus not liable to militia service were nonetheless

⁵²⁶Ferdinand Hanusch, Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927) 42.

⁵²⁷Ferdinand Hanusch, Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927) 43.

⁵²⁸AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 19, 1914/66/3/Vojenské úkony horníků na Ostravsku. *Na celé řadě uhelných závodů na Ostravsku byli oni ahvíři, kteří nebyli povoláni k vojenské službě určení ve svém dosavadním zaměstnání pro vojenské úkony. Museli složit povinnou přísahu vojenskou, takže vojenskou svou povinnost budou vykonávat v dolech.*

⁵²⁹*Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 5.

subject to the War Production Law. Martial law had replaced civilian justice entirely. Strikes were forbidden, and labor unrest was punishable by imprisonment, being transferred to front-line service, or even in extreme cases execution for treason.⁵³⁰ The costs associated with defying the militarized regime under which the miners were forced to serve were very high.

Mobilization

In Austria-Hungary, as in the other belligerent states, mobilization was a festival of cheering crowds and patriotic speeches. An outflow of patriotic feeling accompanied the thrill of change; war held out the promise of regeneration. This did not mean everyone was overjoyed to go off to war, but mobilization was carried through surprisingly successfully.⁵³¹ All of the extant political and national groupings, even the Czechs, showed themselves to be loyal subjects of the Habsburg crown, though the Czechs in particular were not infected with a great deal of war enthusiasm. Jan Havránek highlighted the mood in Prague during mobilization as depressed, as "Czechs, who after mobilization on St. Anna's Day, the 26th of July, fulfilled their obligations and marched into the army with the song 'swing around the black handkerchief, we go to Serbia and we do not know why'".⁵³²

Czech units throughout the Bohemian Lands also mobilized just as faithfully as all other Austro-Hungarian units, despite wide-spread governmental fears of disloyalty and russophilism. Scattered minor incidents did occur, such as when a Militia conscript in Prague, one Otokar Luštinec by name, answered his ethnic German comrades' 'Long live Austria!' with his own

⁵³⁰Ibid., 189.

⁵³¹István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 190-191.

⁵³²Jan Havránek, "Politické represe a zásobovací potíže v českých zemích v letech 1914-1918," in: Mommsen, Kováč, Malíř, Marková, *První světová válka a vztahy mezi Čechy, Slováky a Němci* (Brno: Matice Moravská v Brně, 2000) 38. *Červený šatečku kolem se toč/My jdeme na Srba, nevíme proč.*

'Long live Serbia, and may Austria perish!'. He was promptly beaten and handed over to the police.⁵³³ Such events were neither widespread nor important, but worries persisted that the Czech population would hinder mobilization.⁵³⁴

Mobilization in Ostravsko was also a straightforward and successful endeavor on the whole, unmarred by ethno-nationalist violence or indeed resistance of any kind. The State Gendarme Command (*Landesgendarmeriekommando*) in Opava/Troppau requested a summary of problems during mobilization from the Police Directorate in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau at the end of August, the response to which was quite positive.⁵³⁵ Generally, the Police Directorate observed that "[t]he course of the mobilization in the municipalities [*Gemeinde*] of the local police district has proceeded peacefully and without objection...nothing illegal has been observed."⁵³⁶ By the submission of the report (on September 1st), not a single person had been arrested during the conscription process, nor had any man called to the colors failed to report. Further, the Gendarmes in the district as well as their seconded police auxiliaries had established a solid working relationship with their military counterparts, the *Landsturm* personnel assigned to the industrial and mining concerns in Ostravsko.⁵³⁷

Pious Militarists: Conrad von Hötzendorf and Karl von Stürgkh

Important elements of the Habsburg military and civilian administrations continued to harbor paranoid fears of Slav disloyalty even after the successful mobilization. Such fears, and the consequent calls for the imposition of "that iron fist, which is so potent a guard for those

⁵³³Státní Ústřední Archiv v Praze, *Sborník dokumentů*. 1:31-32. The incident occurred in the railway station Kukus, on the 27th of July, 1914.

⁵³⁴For instance, see Statthalter Franz Thun's declarations of the 25th and 26th of July, 1914, in *Ibid.*, 23-27.

⁵³⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 691/Aug. 30, 1914/Zl. 150ad/Mob-Verlauf.

⁵³⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 691/Sep. 1, 1914/Meldung.

⁵³⁷*Ibid.*

interests that govern in Transleithania,” would play a significant role in driving the Slavic peoples of the Monarchy away from their allegiance to the Habsburgs.⁵³⁸ The Czechs in particular were routinely accused of treason and cowardice by the military authorities, both at home and at the front.⁵³⁹

The head of the Army High Command (*Armeeoberkommando*, or AOK), Conrad von Hötzendorf, was a convinced Slavophobe, an inveterate opponent of Italians, a convinced Social Darwinist, and a high-strung authoritarian in personality. A long-time advocate of war (most commonly against Serbia and/or Italy, though in a pinch anybody would do) Conrad viewed the arrival of the First World War as a golden opportunity to punish his hate objects both at home and abroad.⁵⁴⁰ All of his important subordinates for domestic affairs, transferred from the General Staff to the AOK along with Conrad, shared his general authoritarian, centralist, and Slavophobic views (though fewer were Social Darwinist) and brought those views to their own work exercising the vast new powers granted to the military.⁵⁴¹

The Austro-Hungarian military was possessed of a thoroughly old-fashioned self-image and set of norms. Most importantly for their domestic interventions, members of the military and

⁵³⁸Conrad to Hohenlohe, Dec. 12th, 1915. ÖstA/KA -Tb. Kundmann, 12.12. 1915. Reprinted in: Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 170. For more in-depth treatments of German radicalism and slavophobia in Cisleithania, see Gary W. Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy: Austria-Hungary and the German Alliance, 1914-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Robert A. Kann, *The Multi-National Empire: Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950).

⁵³⁹Jan Havránek, "Politische Repression und Versorgungsengpässe in den böhmischen Ländern 1914 bis 1918," in *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Beziehungen zwischen Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutschen*, ed. Hans Mommsen, Dušan Kovič, and Jiří Malíř (Essen: Klartext, 2001).

⁵⁴⁰As well as a golden opportunity to separate his mistress from her husband. For Conrad's character and history, see: Lawrence Sondhaus, *Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf: Architect of the Apocalypse* (Boston: Humanities Press, 2000).

⁵⁴¹In the Operations Division, headed by Colonel Metzger, Lieutenant Colonel Slameczka and Major Schneider were responsible for domestic affairs. The Intelligence Division and its subordinate Reconnaissance Service (Kundschaftsdienst), headed by Colonel Hranilović and Lieutenant-Colonel Ronge, respectively, frequently engaged in domestic affairs. These five men, along with Conrad and his adjutant, Colonel Kundmann, together decided AOK domestic policies. See: Christoph Führ, *Das K.u.K. Armeeoberkommando und die Innenpolitik in Österreich, 1914-1917* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1968) 25.

most especially the officers saw themselves as being the avatars of the Empire, the personal knights of the Emperor himself. They considered themselves to be "beyond nationalism," in István Deák's famous phrase.⁵⁴² They also considered themselves to be above politics, and held nationalists, politics, and their practitioners in contempt. This attitude extended itself even to the imperial bureaucracy, which, though presenting itself as being similarly anational and apolitical, was in the view of the army far too indulgent of centripetal and fundamentally illegitimate political and nationalist movements. From an organizational standpoint, the bureaucracy was also the army's main competitor for resources.⁵⁴³

These ideological predilections manifested themselves in a centralist and neo-absolutist program that aimed to turn back the clock to the *Vormärz* era. This program further aimed to maintain and strengthen a sharp dividing line between civilians and the prosecution of the First World War. The Habsburg military's attempt to maintain this sharp distinction was virtually unique in Europe and has been insufficiently appreciated by historians. The Imperial German Army was imbricated in politics up to its eyebrows, and acted to mobilize and organize civilians for military purposes for years before the First World War broke out.⁵⁴⁴ The French Third Republic was the inheritor of the *levée en masse* and marched to the refrain of "*aux armes citoyens*." The British military, though a long-serving professional army before the war, was and always had been under complete civilian control. Even the Imperial Russian army had sought to become more nationalist, more popular, and more cooperative with civil society in the years

⁵⁴²István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵⁴³Jonathan Gumz, *The Resurrection and Collapse of Empire in Habsburg Serbia, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). 13-15.

⁵⁴⁴As one illustrative example, the German Army League was founded in 1912 for the purpose of propagandizing the German population in favor of military expenditures and support for the military's policy goals more generally. See: Marilyn Shevin Coetzee, *The German Army League: Popular Nationalism in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

following their humiliation in the Russo-Japanese War.⁵⁴⁵ Of the major combatants, perhaps only Italy's war effort, headed by Luigi Cadorna, disposed of a similar contempt for civilians, politics, and accountability.⁵⁴⁶

As a consequence of this sharp conceptual division, the Habsburg military understood the role of the civilian authorities as managing the civilian population on behalf of the military, and the role of the civilian population as unquestioning obedience to the dictates of authority. Civilian challenges to military measures were presumptively illegitimate. Challenges to military measures or military authority by the general population reflected, in this view, the failure of the civilian government to control their subordinates as well as a serious abrogation of the obligations of the citizens themselves.⁵⁴⁷

The top echelon of the civilian government was similarly centralist and authoritarian, and was deeply deferential to the military worldview and to military claims. Count Karl von Stürgkh, Minister-President since November 1911, began his political career as an ultraconservative and clericalist representative from Styria in the *Reichsrat* in 1891. After losing his seat following the 1907 electoral reform (which he strongly opposed) Franz Josef named him a member of the parliament's upper chamber, the House of Lords (*Herrenhaus*). He then served as Minister of Education from 1908-1911. As Minister-President, he was responsible for dissolving the Bohemian *Landtag* in 1913 and, following a Czech-national filibuster of a government bill to

⁵⁴⁵See Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1906-1925* (DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 2003).

⁵⁴⁶Italy's entry into the war was brought about essentially by a court-military camarilla and was deeply unpopular with both the general population and indeed the bulk of the government. The incompetent and ruinously expensive prosecution of the war hardly improved public perceptions of the Army. See Luigi Tomassini, Catherine Frost, "Industrial Mobilization and the Labour Market in Italy during the First World War" *Social History*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1991) 59-62.

⁵⁴⁷Gumz, *Resurrection and Collapse*, 30-34.

increase the size of the army, prorogued the *Reichsrat* indefinitely on March 16th, 1914.⁵⁴⁸ His cabinet was composed primarily of ethnic Germans and of bureaucrats, and though Stürgkh himself disposed of cordial relations with Slavic leaders his Minister of Justice, von Hohenburger, was for the Czechs the "best-hated" Justice Minister and a dedicated German nationalist.⁵⁴⁹

More important than their generally German-national character, though, was their decided deference to military authority during wartime. In a circular issued to the various heads of state government in Cisleithania at the end of July, 1914, Stürgkh went into some detail as to the obligations of "of officials standing in an especially responsible and loyal relationship to the state."⁵⁵⁰ The officials under his supervision ought "empower the population without regard to class, nation, and religious affiliation [with] the gathering of the powers of all well-meaning patriotic elements to the demonstration of their love of the Fatherland in word and deed, and spur them to ready and self-sacrificing cooperation with all measures which are determined to serve the securing, unfolding, and effective utilization of the army..."⁵⁵¹ With regards to elements of Habsburg society taking either a lukewarm or hostile attitude towards the army or the state, Stürgkh "expect[ed] that action will be taken against these elements on [the officials'] part...and on the part of all other organs of the administrative region with unbending energy and

⁵⁴⁸He later reminisced that the dissolution of the *Reichsrat* was one of his proudest moments. *Die Neue Freie Presse*, Mar. 17, 1914. "Die Begründung der Vertagung und des §14 durch die Regierung."; *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). XXIV. Stück, Nr. 59. 263-264.

⁵⁴⁹Christoph Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*, 20; Alois Czedik, *Zur Geschichte der k.k. österreichischen Ministerien, 1861-1916*. 4 vols. (Vienna: Karel Prochaska, 1917-1920) IV: 340.

⁵⁵⁰Reprinted in: Ludwig Brügel, *Geschichte der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie*. 5 vols. (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1922) V: 210.

⁵⁵¹Reprinted in: Ludwig Brügel, *Geschichte der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie*. 5 vols. (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1922) V: 210.

remorseless harshness under exploitation of all available methods."⁵⁵² There was no longer room for politics or dissent in the new Austria created by the war - "in the entire administrative area of the central government [*Staatsverwaltung*] all such points of view and considerations which under normal circumstances may have their independent justification move decisively behind the great goals whose attainment is not being undertaken with armed force, and thereby behind the interests of the army, *which is provided for the execution of the will of the state*."⁵⁵³

Stürgkh's identification of the military with the will of the state and eagerness to abandon both general political engagement as well as the independence of the civil administration to serve the interests of the Habsburg military meant that there were practically speaking no real checks on AOK's exercise of the broad legal powers granted them at the beginning of the war. The Emperor of course retained the right to intervene, but had neither the energy nor the stomach to enter into bruising bureaucratic battles with his chief subordinates. His most aggressive response to military overreach came on the 17th of September, 1914, in the form of an Imperial Order to Conrad. Written at the request of the Hungarian Minister-President Isztvan Tisza in response to a series of arbitrary military arrests and executions in the Banat and Syrmia, on the Serbian border.⁵⁵⁴ In response to "many complaints, that in recent times renewed and numerous arrests of supposedly political suspects [*Verdächtigen*] or unreliaables have taken place in all areas of the Monarchy," the Emperor ordered "all military offices be strictly instructed to direct (*veranlassen*) such measures only on the basis of serious cause [*Verdachtsmoment*]."⁵⁵⁵ As the central problem

⁵⁵²Reprinted in: Ludwig Brügel, *Geschichte der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie*. 5 vols. (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1922) V: 210.

⁵⁵³Reprinted in: Ludwig Brügel, *Geschichte der österreichischen Sozialdemokratie*. 5 vols. (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1922) V: 210. Italics mine - *und damit eben auch hinter den Interessen der Wehrmacht, die zur Vollstreckung des Staatswillens aufgeboden ist.*

⁵⁵⁴Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*. 27.

⁵⁵⁵ÖstA/KA 69-11/2/MK-14. Reprinted in: Führ, *Armeeoberkommando*. 27.

was in many ways a disagreement on what consisted serious cause, and as the commanded instruction would be written by the Army High Command which had ordered the arbitrary arrests and punishments in the first place, this command made little difference.

Organizational Life in Ostravsko

The Imperial and Royal government initially regarded Social Democracy as a potent threat to the war effort, taking Marxist rhetoric of class solidarity and internationalism seriously. The left wings of the ethnically divided Austrian Social Democratic parties did certainly contain members who urged a general strike against the war in solidarity with the European working class.⁵⁵⁶ In all the major parties, though, the leadership announced itself loyal to Emperor and Fatherland and supported the war effort with all their power.⁵⁵⁷ The German Social Democratic party leadership, for example, exhorted their followers to “show that the men of the class struggle will also give their last breath in service to the flag!”⁵⁵⁸ Indeed, by 1917 Social Democratic political organizations had become fully integrated into the state and formed an indispensable prop to its authority.⁵⁵⁹

Na zdar, the “central organ of miners and metalworkers in Austria,” published an appeal to its readers on the 5th of August, 1914, which marked the Czech-speaking Social Democratic position on the war. As their fraternal German party leadership, the editorial called upon Czech Social Democrats to “show that in our councils there are no draft dodgers, that the men of the

⁵⁵⁶Austro-Hungarian Social Democracy was split between German, Czech, Yugoslav, Italian, and Polish parties, which themselves had sometimes important internal divisions. See Hermann J.W. Kuprian, “On the Threshold of the Twentieth Century: State and Society in Austria before World War I,” in *Austria in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Rolf Steininger, Günter Bischof and Michael Gehler (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002). 23.

⁵⁵⁷See for example the Vienna Police Directorate's report of Nov. 8th, 1914 on the position of the German party leadership in Vienna. AVA Mdl 22i.g.16282, reprinted in: Rudolf Neck, *Arbeiterschaft und Staat im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914-1918* (Vienna, Europa-Verlag, 1964). 8-11.

⁵⁵⁸*Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 3.

⁵⁵⁹Hautmann, “Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch,” 677.

class struggle also stand under their flag unto their last breath."⁵⁶⁰ Beyond their expressions of loyalty and greetings to the soldiers, though, the editorialists advanced the contention that the main role of the Social Democratic organization and its adherents during the war was to endure intact until the end of the war. The argument held that "war events have as a consequence great changes in the internal lives of states and nations. The war will establish a new Austria. [The war] fundamentally changes the conditions of struggle...Therefore maintenance of our organization is our responsibility in this hour. Disturbance of our organization would betray us after the war to our economic and political enemies."⁵⁶¹

The newly authoritarian and militarized principles regulating domestic life in Cisleithania, the editorialists conceded, prevented any concrete action. The new state of affairs further considerably heightened the risks of repression, and in the interests of maintenance "all ought vanish, which could give to government offices a valid cause for the suppression of our organization. Official measures implemented by means of the state of emergency, especially annunciation of meetings, must be followed punctiliously. Comrades must challenge themselves to forbear from every hasty word...and must be on guard against interlopers and informants. The state of emergency throttles [*obmezuje*] ordinary free criticism. Therefore must our comrades remain even more true to our press, in order to retain the most important tool among our connections."⁵⁶² The secretary of the Imperial Union Commission for the Austrian Miners' Union, Anton Hueber, published an appeal on the same lines the following week, in which he and his union "expect from the proletarian cognizance of responsibility of our stewards...[to] pay the

⁵⁶⁰AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 5, 1914/č. 31/1/Dělníci a dělnice! Soudruzi!

⁵⁶¹AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 5, 1914/č. 31/1/Dělníci a dělnice! Soudruzi!

⁵⁶²AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 5, 1914/č. 31/1/Dělníci a dělnice! Soudruzi!

most precise attention to statutory regulations and administrative decrees."⁵⁶³

Polish-speaking Social Democratic organs also, while not approving of the war, nevertheless promised to support it. A manifesto published in the main Polish-language Social Democratic paper, *Naprzód* (*Forward*), promised "let the stones fall; Polish workers will fulfill their responsibility. We will fulfill this responsibility gallantly..."⁵⁶⁴ Far from inciting resistance or rebellion, the official party line among Social Democrats held that all adherents to their movement ought immediately become model patriots and citizens, and that concrete advances would rain from the heavens - after the war.

Associational life was another area in which the state of war brought about more restrictive circumstances. Local political offices gained the right to suspend organizational activity as well as veto power over the formation of new organizations. These offices could further issue any restrictions on associational life deemed necessary, whether general or specific, on penalty of six months imprisonment. Also liable to permission from political and police offices were any public gathering, including weddings, festivals of any kind, funerals, and processions.⁵⁶⁵ Beyond legal impediments, many organizations suffered decimation simply from the breadth of mobilization; the Socialists bemoaned the loss of "half of our stewards and functionaries [who] are departing for military service."⁵⁶⁶ The Union of Austrian Miners suffered such a sharp drop in their revenues that their operations were endangered. They moved, for instance, to cut off any member more than five weeks behind on dues from any claim to Union

⁵⁶³AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 12, 1914/č. 32/1/Odborovým důvěrníkům v Rakousku.

⁵⁶⁴AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 1, 1914/61/5/Polští sociální demokraté pro válku?

⁵⁶⁵AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 8, 1914/63/2/Veřejný život v době válečného stavu.

⁵⁶⁶AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Decimování našich řad.

financial support in order to prevent delinquency in payments.⁵⁶⁷

However, despite their support for the state and loud declarations of loyalty, Social Democratic fears of the state-ordered dissolution of their organization were quite realistic. The Police Directorate indeed moved against organized labor soon afterwards. In late August, for example, announcements went up at the Brothers Guttman coal operations in Orlova/Orlau, Lazy/Lazy, and Poruba/Porembe, declaring that the workers employed by these operations may no longer participate in meetings nor belong to any group or organization.⁵⁶⁸ The secretaries of the Union of Austrian Miners and Union of Stokers and Machinists, Vojtěch Brda and Josef Koukal, appealed for a reversal of the ruling, arguing that their organizations performed valuable war services as well as supporting thousands of unemployed workers, but to no avail.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁷AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 19, 1914/č. 33/1/Členům an funkcionářům Unie.

⁵⁶⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 682/Aug. 27, 1914/Pr. 682/Slavné c.k. policejní komisařství. It is not clear why Brothers Guttman workers were specifically targeted.

⁵⁶⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 682/Aug. 27, 1914/Pr. 682/Slavné c.k. policejní komisařství.

The Politics of Sacrifice

Unemployment

Confusions brought about by the new conditions of administration and living included pressing matters such as conscription obligations. The general summoning to the colors of workers liable to conscription began on the 28th of July, three days after mobilization began - the interim was spent gathering the region's conscripted horses, a higher priority than the gathering of manpower.⁵⁷⁰ The War Ministry, though, was cognizant of the centrality of the Ostrava-Karviná area to the Monarchy's coal production and had thus arranged that in the district those men liable to *Landsturm* service but not liable to conscription were not inducted into military service at the front.⁵⁷¹ This restriction was limited to officials, supervisory personnel, and mineworkers without draft cards, and this exemption was valid only for the month of August.⁵⁷²

Large numbers of workers crucial to coal and steel production nevertheless took up rifles and rucksacks and went off to fight the foes of the Habsburgs, as even after such arrangements the Ostrava-Karviná district sent approximately a quarter of its industrial population into the army during the initial mobilization, including large numbers of industrial workers in their prime.⁵⁷³ Some of these skilled workers immediately conscripted eventually returned to finish out their military service through work in the district, though large-scale skill-based repatriation was largely a phenomenon observed in late 1916 and early 1917.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁰AMO/740/Kč. 697/Sig. Mob 9/4/Tätigkeit der Gemeindefunktionäre.

⁵⁷¹Ferdinand Hanusch and Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky) 177.

⁵⁷²AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Výhody horníků rothschildovských závodu.

⁵⁷³24.6%. Wegs, *Die österreichische Kriegswirtschaft*, 84.

⁵⁷⁴*Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege*, ed. Ferdinand Hanusch and Emanuel Adler (Vienna: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky) 177-178.

Some *Landsturm*-liable workers were summoned to service immediately, some on the 30th of August, some relieved of their service obligations until June 1915, and some were relieved of such obligations "indefinitely."⁵⁷⁵ The immediate decisions for who fell into each category was first dependent on the employer, who decided which of their employees were necessary for their operations and thereby applied for the lifting of *Landsturm* obligations. The Ministry of War and the Ministry of National Defence (*Landesverteidigungsministerium*) then reviewed the requests and affirmed or denied them.⁵⁷⁶

Despite exemptions applied for and received, the Habsburg military swept up enormous numbers of workers at the beginning of the war. Between July 31st and August 23rd, 1914, the Vítkovice Steelworks lost slightly over five thousand workers to the Black and Gold, almost a third of their entire workforce.⁵⁷⁷ Not even those departments important to war production were spared: the puddling works went from 323 workers to 240, the blast furnaces lost 285 employees of 711, the iron foundry lost 263 of 1198 workers, the boilerworks lost 101 of 509 employees, the drawing mill lost 397 workers out of 1,248, and even the engineering works went from 2436 workers to 1890.⁵⁷⁸ The mining workforce also shrank considerably - approximately fourteen percent of anthracite mining operations workers were lost to the military.⁵⁷⁹ In Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau the Solomon and Karolina shafts, for example, lost 443 workers to the army, of

⁵⁷⁵AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Výhody horníků rothschildovských závodu. Some employees of the Vítkovice Steelworks received even longer releases, for the "duration of the war," which expired at the end of June, 1915. See AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 31, 1914/Zl. 4537/Endgültige Erledigung der Enthebungsansuchen.

⁵⁷⁶AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 31, 1914/Zl. 4537/Endgültige Erledigung der Enthebungsansuchen.

⁵⁷⁷AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 23, 1914/Arbeiterstand, 23. August 1914. 17,371 workers to 12,388 workers, a loss of 5,002.

⁵⁷⁸AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 23, 1914/Arbeiterstand, 23. August 1914.

⁵⁷⁹Emil Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich Während des Krieges* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925) 18.

which 325 were married, while the Sophia metal and glassworks lost 603 workers, 362 of which left families behind.⁵⁸⁰

The complex web of economic relationships which ordered much of material life in Ostravsko was also thoroughly and abruptly deranged. Poor pre-war planning and the Imperial and Royal Army's failures in Galicia and Serbia brought with it in train massive dislocations in labor conditions and demand and supply relationships throughout the Monarchy. The Ostrava-Karviná district was no exception. In Nový Jičín/Neutitschein, for example, the "Proclamation of general mobilization summoned here the highest dislocation...and now after the departure of the mobilized a great depression has set in. Some of the small factories have already on Saturday completely ceased production, and in some of the larger factories...is as a consequence of the closing of the railways production interrupted indefinitely, which here summons fears for the future."⁵⁸¹ The Municipal Police Office in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau reported on the 1st of September that 783 workers in the municipality in all different employment categories were now unemployed.⁵⁸² Newspapers worried about a "dead region," where "here will remain only youths or only elderly men or those who were not soldiers...the great family of small shops are being closed and workers and merchants must unwillingly idle."⁵⁸³

Transportation bottlenecks, conscription, and uncertain availability of finances were distributed unevenly throughout the economy but the knock-on effects affected virtually

⁵⁸⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 160/Sig. 316/Sep. 5, 1914/Zl. 71/Bericht über Arbeitslosen.

⁵⁸¹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Po mobilisaci v Nov. Jičíně. *Vyhlášení všeobecně mobilisace vyvolalo zde nejvyšší vzrušení...a nyní po odjezdu mobilisovaných, zavládla velká skličenosť. Některé menší továrny zastavily již v sobotu výrobu úplně a v některých velkých továrnách...je následkem uzavření drah výroba na neurčito přerušena, což zde vyvolává obavy do budoucna.*

⁵⁸²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 160/Sig. 316/Sep. 1, 1914/Anzahl der angemeldeten Arbeitslosen.

⁵⁸³AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Umrtný kraj. *Zůstali tu jen značně mladší nebo vůbec jen starší mužové a nebo ti, kdož vojáky nebyli....veliká řada malořivnostenských dílen byla uzavřena a zbyli dělníci i živnostníci musejí nedobrovolně zahálet.*

everyone in a general supply-driven recession. The District Commissioner held particularly responsible the high interest rate charged by the Austro-Hungarian Bank's discounting operations, as "many firms have been forced to reduce production not out of lack of available orders but because in current conditions no money is to be had and it is therefore impossible for the factories to acquire raw materials, which payment had to be in cash, or to compensate their workers."⁵⁸⁴ In Hrušova/Hruschau, an earthenwares manufactory shut its doors, and the Hubert shaft ceased operations due to a labor shortage after three hundred of their miners were conscripted. In Děčín/Tetschen, a textiles factory furloughed its workforce. The Austrian Mining-Metalworking Corporation curtailed production all of their operations, among which were the ironworks in Trzyniec/Třinec.⁵⁸⁵ A clay goods manufactory in Polish Lutynia/Leuten ceased operations.⁵⁸⁶ A severe shortage of wagons due to military transport requisitioning made coal transport impossible and led to "the piling up of enormous coal stockpiles and as a result of the market stagnation forced the dismissal of workers."⁵⁸⁷

Financial dislocations affected the general population as well, though to a large extent this was a self-caused problem. Fears of devaluation drove distrust of paper money on the part of many consumers and a refusal to accept paper money on the part of many merchants. These refusals prompted a sharp announcement from the Imperial-Royal District Commissioner Dr. Viktor Gschmeidler that "paper money is a legal means of payment that therefore must be accepted."⁵⁸⁸ The effectiveness of administrative admonishment on concerns about the

⁵⁸⁴AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 20, 1914/Protokoll...über die erste Sitzung des Zentralkomités für Kriegsfürsorge

⁵⁸⁵AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 15, 1914/65/3/Sociální a hosp. Rozhledy.

⁵⁸⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 160/Sig. 316/Aug. 31, 914/Zl. 12/53res/Pr. 675/Wirtschaftliche Mobilisierungsvorsorgen, Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit.

⁵⁸⁷AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 20, 1914/Protokoll...über die erste Sitzung des Zentralkomités für Kriegsfürsorge.

⁵⁸⁸AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Něchtějí parírové peníze.

devaluation of paper money, though, seems to have been minimal. By the 10th of August, 1914, hoarding of specie led to the Imperial-Royal District Mining Office for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau releasing an official notice regulating over- and under-payment of wages, as "an insufficiency of metallic currency (low-denomination) reigns and ten crown banknotes will be therefore the first resort due to pressures of pay periods of workers in mining operations a coking works, which will conclude at the end of this week...it will not be possible to pay these workers their clean wages at their exact values."⁵⁸⁹ Wages were to be rounded to the nearest ten crowns, with the difference to be hopefully made up in the following pay period once enough small-denomination currency could be acquired to make change.

Bank runs also occurred, with cash withdrawals from banks and financial institutions happening across the Monarchy. The Moravian *Statthalter*, in an attempt to quell such, released a statement rebutting "mistaken fairy tales that have been spread regarding the security of financial institutions and savings banks."⁵⁹⁰ He reassured the public that "money saved in financial institutions and mainly savings banks are much better stored, than it would be stored in the hands of its owners."⁵⁹¹ He offered no particular policy intervention, but hoped the power of suasion would solve the issue. Perhaps not suasion, but instead the enormous sums paid out by the Habsburg military for all possible kinds of goods papered over monetary shortages and quickly restored liquidity to cash transactions. Shortages of specie largely ceased to be a problem until later in the war, though the premium commanded by specie over banknotes did not shrink regardless of the *Statthalter*'s proclamation.

⁵⁸⁹AMO/NN10/7/534/Na zdar/Aug. 12, 1914/33/8/Vyhláška. *Panující nedostatek kovových peněz (drobných) a 10korunových bankovek bude mítí nejspíše potud vliv i na výplatu dělníků v důlních závodech a koksovnach, která se bude konatá koncem tohoto týdne, že nebude možno výplatiti těmto dělníkům čistý výdělek přesným obnosem.*

⁵⁹⁰AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 1, 1914/61/3/Proti vybírání vkladů z peněžných ústavů.

⁵⁹¹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 1, 1914/61/3/Proti vybírání vkladů z peněžných ústavů.

Labor and employment issues were also deeply impacted by Ostravsko's entry into the First World War. The Vítkovice Steelworks experienced major work slowdowns, with some departments operating only two days a week and the remaining workers facing severe problems supporting themselves and their families on half-pay or less. The situation was bad enough that, "among the workers the rumor is spreading that from the 1st of September production at the steelworks would cease completely."⁵⁹² However, this underemployment policy prevented unemployment, and the Gendarme post in Vítkovice/Witkowitz reported that only between forty and fifty workers were unemployed in the municipality.⁵⁹³

By the end of August the progressive economic crises had come under discussion as demanding a state response. Silesian State President Max Coudenhove sketched out the outlines of the dislocations "which could lead further to reductions, or temporary or even permanent cessation of production and threaten especially the industrial and commercial population with the loss of their employment and commercial opportunities" in a directive issued to all *Bezirkshauptmannschaften* in Silesia.⁵⁹⁴ In response to the unemployment emergency the provision of direct work in the form of public works - railways, streets, canals, and other such construction projects ought be continued, expanded, or begun as emergency measures. Further, the individual *Bezirke* were requested to report the number and location of the unemployed under their remit and the kinds and extent of their public works projects.⁵⁹⁵

⁵⁹²AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 15, 1914/65/3/Vítkovické závody. This was, though, not universally true. The *strojirna* was running flat out at this point, operating 24 hours a day. *Mezi dělnictvem rozšířena je pověst, že od 1. září se vůbec výroba ve Vítkovicích zastaví.*

⁵⁹³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 160/Sig. 316/Sep. 1, 1914/Zl. 88res/Pr. 675/Wirtschaftliche Mobilisierungsvorsorgen, Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit.

⁵⁹⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 160/Sig. 316/Aug. 25, 1914/Pr. 2264/Wirtschaftliche Mobilisierungsvorsorgen, Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit.

⁵⁹⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 160/Sig. 316/Aug. 25, 1914/Pr. 2264/Wirtschaftliche Mobilisierungsvorsorgen, Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit.

The Central Committee for War Relief (*Zentralkomité für Kriegsfürsorge*) for Ostravsko, chaired by the District Commissioner, Dr. Gschmeidler, first met on the 20th of August, 1914, to discuss a response to the suffering experienced in the district.⁵⁹⁶ Following a "comprehensive" debate, the Committee agreed on three main points. First, that the district should not provide support to the activities of the Red Cross, as these activities fell outside of their sphere of responsibility. Second, that the pressing unemployment problems in the region were caused by the slowing or ceasing of production on the part of the various industrial concerns in Ostravsko and that the district would "not support all unemployed and exigent who apply, but only those who were registered inhabitants of the district on August 1st, 1914."⁵⁹⁷ And third, that local committees (*Ortskomités*) based in the various municipalities were to be created and charged with attending to local matters such as poor relief and feeding the poor. Finally, those present complained of the "various gatherings of unknown and unlegitimated persons, supposedly for wounded soldiers, the Red Cross, etc. who meet without permission" and urged decisive action for the restoration of a strict order in the district.⁵⁹⁸

At the end of August, despite calls to the colors unemployment remained a pressing issue. The Employment Office for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau reported almost six hundred unemployed job seekers registered with the municipality, two hundred of which were craftsmen or day laborers.⁵⁹⁹ By the 1st of September, the number of unemployed had increased to from 571 to 738, of which over three hundred were hand workers of various kinds, as well as almost two hundred

⁵⁹⁶AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 20, 1914/Protokoll...über die erste Sitzung des Zentralkomités für Kriegsfürsorge.

⁵⁹⁷AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 20, 1914/Protokoll...über die erste Sitzung des Zentralkomités für Kriegsfürsorge.

⁵⁹⁸AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Aug. 20, 1914/Protokoll...über die erste Sitzung des Zentralkomités für Kriegsfürsorge

⁵⁹⁹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 29, 1914/69/3/Nezaměstnost v Mor. Ostravě.

skilled industrial workers and forty-seven women.⁶⁰⁰ Coudenhove's call for public works programs had resulted in nothing (though some were suggested - for instance, construction of a rail line to Brušperk/Braunsberg), and "there is no work and hundreds of people here will be without work and without bread."⁶⁰¹

The support of these unemployed was typically meager and precarious. The editors of *Duch času*, in an editorial aimed at both elevating the plight of the unemployed in the area as well as justifying the limitations on unemployment support offered through the district's Social Democratic organization, called for a much-expanded state role in providing for the unemployed.⁶⁰² By this point the great battle raging in Galicia had expanded the unemployment discussion from general unemployment problems and towards an emphasis on the specific needs of war victims. In part, this reflected increasing demand for able-bodied men, as shocked labor markets began to unfreeze and the army expanded conscription to make up for the unexpectedly large casualty lists coming in from the battlefield.⁶⁰³ This shift also represented the immediate consequences of the war, which is to say able-bodied men leaving their homes and occupations and in many cases returning as either shattered shells of their former selves or in coffins. An element of conversation-shifting was also present - by focusing on war victims instead of the able-bodied unemployed, the editorial shifted focus to state responsibilities rather than Social Democratic responsibilities. In either case, their dependents were without the support of their wages, and the convalescents themselves needed to be fed, clothed, and housed as they

⁶⁰⁰The unemployed women, unlike the unemployed men, are not identified by labor category but solely by gender. AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 8, 1914/72/3/Nezaměstnost v Mor. Ostravě.

⁶⁰¹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 8, 1914/72/3/Nezaměstnost v Mor. Ostravě.

⁶⁰²AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 15, 1914/75/3/Na nezaměstnané dělnictvo nesmí býti zapomináno.

⁶⁰³For increased conscription, see: AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 15, 1914/75/1/Povolání nových domobranců. For increasing labor demand, see Ferdinand Hanusch, Emanuel Adler, eds., *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse im Kriege* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1927) 77-78.

recovered.

Soldiers wounded on the front were already being transported away from the fighting front, and many came to Ostravsko - the first transport arrived on the 11th of September, arriving in the evening with approximately seven hundred and fifty wounded men and overflowing the available dedicated and improvised hospital space, with almost five hundred more arriving over the weekend.⁶⁰⁴ Fifty-seven of these wounded men were from Ostravsko, and their names and the locations of their hospitals were printed on the 19th of September.⁶⁰⁵ War wounded impinged on the public consciousness in Ostravsko deeply and early.

The figures of these broken men and their dependents were quickly invoked to support calls for an expansion of state support for those without sufficient means of their own - "If anyone requires help and defense, they are the poor and desolate wives and children, as well as the wounded and deeply disabled soldiers."⁶⁰⁶ It was the responsibility of the state, the editorial argued, to care for these needy as a caring father, not only for those wounded in the war but also those affected by it, such as unemployed workers. The state could afford to bear that burden, unlike the unemployment support funds built up in the coffers of the Social Democratic trade union, which could only support its own unemployed members, and that insufficiently and only for a limited time.⁶⁰⁷

The Austrian state did indeed take on welfare obligations at the beginning of the war, although limited to a stipend paid to dependents of men called to the colors, either to active

⁶⁰⁴AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 16, 1914/76/3-4/Na 1200 raněných na Ostravsku.

⁶⁰⁵AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 19, 1914/77/3/Seznam raněných vojáků, rodáků z Ostravska a okolí, umístěných ve zdejších a okolních lazaretech.

⁶⁰⁶AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 15, 1914/75/3/Na nazaměstnané dělnictvo nesmí býti zapomínáno. *Potřebuje-li někdo pomoci a ochrany, jsou to chudé a opuštěné ženy a děti, jakož i zranění a velmi těžce postižení vojáci.*

⁶⁰⁷AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Sep. 15, 1914/75/3/Na nazaměstnané dělnictvo nesmí býti zapomínáno.

service in the armed forces or to service in the Home Guard (*Landwehr*, or *domobrana*). This stipend was meant as an allowance for food and rent, and could be claimed by any relative of a conscripted soldier who was previously dependent on that soldier, including grandparents, in-laws, and aunts and uncles. Wives and children could even receive this allowance while living abroad, though more distant relatives could only claim it while domiciled domestically.⁶⁰⁸

The amount of the stipend was to be determined on a yearly basis by the Ministry of War on the basis of the per diem amount necessary for upkeep in the area of residence, with the housing allowance consisting of half of the food allowance. One adult dependent living in Opava/Troppau would receive K1.23 per day, and elsewhere in Silesia K1.14, while an adult dependent living in the Moravian half of the district would receive K1.20 daily (stipends in Brno were slightly higher, otherwise all of Moravia was on the same rate schedule).⁶⁰⁹ Residents of Ostravsko reliant on these state stipends thus disposed of a food budget between 76 and 80 heller per day. By way of comparison, the immediate pre-war price in Vienna of a kilogram of wheat flour was 42 heller, a kilogram of white bread was 32 heller, and a liter of milk was 30-32 heller.⁶¹⁰

By mid-October, the district Provisioning Board (*komise vyživovací*) for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, responsible for state support for the dependents of those conscripted had processed by one report over a hundred thousand cases of dependent support, but many families

⁶⁰⁸AMO/NN10/7/534/Na Zdar/Aug. 5, 1914/31/1/Příspěvek na výživu příslušníků k činné službě povoláných rakouských záložníků.

⁶⁰⁹AMO/NN10/7/534/Na Zdar/Aug. 5, 1914/31/1/Příspěvek na výživu příslušníků k činné službě povoláných rakouských záložníků.

⁶¹⁰Hans Löwenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 106-107. Statistical tables for prices in Ostravsko are not available. However, it is likely that prices were broadly similar - the stipend for Vienna was K1.32 for the same period.

in Ostravsko continued to complain of a lack of support or of the insufficiency of the stipend.⁶¹¹ *Duch času*, in support of those unjustly or unfairly denied sufficient benefits, printed an article on October 10th, 1914, with advice for the appeals process. Included was an example of a letter of appeal, emphasizing the poverty brought to the hypothetical exemplar and her children by her husband's conscription, the hunger which now stalked her family, and her inability to pay taxes and the interest on mortgaged real property.⁶¹²

This drastic expansion in state support helped ameliorate the enormous impact of the war on economic output and thus employment. The Czech-Slavic (*československý*) Social Democratic leadership in Prague released their statistics on industrial employment in Bohemia and Moravia (excluding Silesia) on the 8th of October, 1914. In the twenty-three Czech-Slavic union departments covering these two crownlands seven hundred and nineteen concerns had entirely ceased operation, throwing 49,051 workers out of work. 377 concerns had severely curtailed their operations, rendering their 56,748 employees half-time rather than full-time. A further five hundred and eleven concerns had curtailed some of their operations, with 18,597 affected workers reduced to half-time.⁶¹³ Support for these un- and semi-employed workers was more generous than municipal unemployment benefits, but was draining the union coffers dry. Industrial labor remained in crisis.

Employment in Ostravsko, though, had recovered to some extent by December. An observer characterized the state of industrial employment in the district as "passable" on the 15th of December, 1914.⁶¹⁴ The district's coal mines were operating at full capacity, with the

⁶¹¹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 10, 1914/86/3/Ženám a rodinám vojáků.

⁶¹²AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 10, 1914/86/3/Ženám a rodinám vojáků.

⁶¹³AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 13, 1914/87/3/Válka, nezaměstnost a odborové organizace.

⁶¹⁴AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 15, 1914/114/3/Omezení výroby na koksovárnách.

stockpiles built up in warehouses due to lack of transport during mobilization having been spent down and with demand increasing due to the arrival of winter. Some subdivisions of the Vítkovice Steelworks and a number of smaller metalworking plants did remain under conditions of limited operation, though, and reductions in steel production led to the cessation of operations at a number of the cokingworks furnaces at the Francis shaft in Přívoz/Oderfurt and the termination of substantial numbers of coking workers. Without an improvement in the steel market further furnace closures could be expected, threatening the livelihoods of thousands.⁶¹⁵

Food and Inflation

The intrinsically connected provisioning and inflationary problems which began with the declaration of the war also became the subject of state intervention. Such problems were not entirely unforeseen or unexpected, and Emperor Franz Josef had issued an Imperial Decree on the 1st of August, 1914, meant to address such concerns. This decree empowered the political offices of the various crownlands to collect and maintain stockpiles of "unavoidable consumption items," defined as "those items necessary for the satisfaction of necessary requirements of living for human beings and as feed for domestic animals as well as those things, from which such items are produced."⁶¹⁶ Further, this decree empowered the state to require reports of stocks from farmers, merchants, and other holders of private supply and to requisition these supplies against reimbursement at a fixed price in order to provision municipalities. Failure to comply was punishable by a year's imprisonment and twenty thousand crowns in fines. Further, anyone attempting to exploit the state of war to demand "excessive" prices for necessary items, or reducing production or trade of such items in order to increase the price would face the same

⁶¹⁵AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 15, 1914/114/3/Omezení výroby na koksovnách.

⁶¹⁶*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). *CIII*. Stück, Nr. 194. 909.

penalties.⁶¹⁷

Hoarding and profiteering presented another threat to economic life. Despite the imperial decree of August 1st, Ostravsko saw food prices spike in August 1914. Immediately following the mobilization order of July 25th, the the municipal government for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau began stockpiling bulk foodstuffs in order to prevent or alleviate profiteering.⁶¹⁸ On the 3rd, District Commissariat in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau called on the Moravian and Silesian state governments in Brno/Brünn and Opava/Troppau to impose a price ceiling for foodstuffs, as Bohemia and Lower Austria already had.⁶¹⁹ This "we ask in the name of thousands of consuming citizens...the men and breadwinners of these families are by their banners. Officials are obligated to negotiate a little protection for the survivors of the family of their soldiers."⁶²⁰ Four days later, on the 7th of August, the governor of Moravia, Dr. Oktavian Bleyleben, duly imposed the requested price ceiling for foodstuffs for the metropolitan area of Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau.⁶²¹ Regrettably, as a later report from the Mayor of Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, Dr. Gustav Fiedler, made clear, this price ceiling was not a panacea. The maximum price level was only applicable to retailers (*Detailhändler*) selling directly to the public, while producers and bulk distributors (*Grosshändler*) were free to allow prices to float.

This disparity between the statutory maximum retail price and the floating wholesale price placed retailers in a vise - either they raised their prices beyond the legal limit, stopped

⁶¹⁷*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). *CIII*. Stück, Nr. 194. 909-910.

⁶¹⁸AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč. 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 4, 1914/Dringlichkeitsantrag.

⁶¹⁹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Žádáme ochranu proti lichvářům s potravinami.

⁶²⁰AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Aug. 5, 1914/62/3/Žádáme ochranu proti lichvářům s potravinami.

⁶²¹AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč. 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 17, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Abschrift.

selling foodstuffs liable to the price ceiling altogether, or drove themselves out of business by taking a loss on their sales. Fiedler blamed this state of affairs largely on "conscienceless bulk sellers, distributors, and producers, who do not shy away from exploiting the grave times of the war in unscrupulous ways for effortless self-enrichment," and undoubtedly elements of Austro-Hungarian commercial and agricultural life engaged in some level of profiteering.⁶²² However, in a supply-constrained environment price ceilings would be expected to lead to widespread shortages and ballooning black-market trade, and so to a certain extent assigning the blame to profiteering and unscrupulous behaviour operated as a (likely genuinely meant) way of eliding the actual problems driving inflation in food costs. As a consequence, the state offices were forced to alter the maximum price level not based on administrative judgements as to a congenial price level but in a staggered footrace pursuing the unregulated wholesale price level. The state administration changed the price ceiling seven times in rapid sequence, mostly to increase it, and by November "[the price ceiling] is not longer even given out, because the aim thereof is seen as illusory."⁶²³

Several days later, City Councillor Aussig directed a desperate missive to the Ministerial Council and the Agricultural Administration in Vienna regarding the "excessive and unjustified increase in food prices, which have begun to take on a catastrophic character."⁶²⁴ By the 7th of September, one hundred kilograms of rye on the Prague Commodity Exchange had gone from twenty crowns flat at the beginning of July to twenty-four crowns, ten heller, and the same quantity of wheat went from twenty-four crowns to thirty-four crowns. One hundred kilograms

⁶²²AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč. 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 17, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Abschrift.

⁶²³AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč. 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 17, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Abschrift.

⁶²⁴AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Sep. 19, 1914/Hohes k.k. Ministerratspraesidium! Underline in the original.

of rye flour in the same period spiked from twenty-eight crowns flat to forty crowns, seventy-five heller, and as a consequence bread prices for the end consumer went from twenty-seven heller per kilogram right before the outbreak of the war to between thirty-six and forty heller per kilogram in the 1st week of September.⁶²⁵ The price increases went from twenty to forty-five percent wholesale, with retail bread prices increasing thirty-three to forty-eight percent.

Aussig, like other officials, argued that these "exorbitant price increases in grain products...have been driven by artificial machinations" as demonstrated by the fact that "in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in this year the harvest was at the very least decent (*mittelgute*), the export ban excluded foreign competition, and the requirements of the domestic market have undoubtedly not increased, but rather through the imposed restrictions on consumers have seen some reduction."⁶²⁶ Aussig, as Fiedler would, thought that the commercial offices' use of their powers to set retail price ceilings, despite their efforts, was ultimately fruitless if the original producers could demand market prices at the point of production. The relentless rise of wholesale prices forced increases in the legal price ceiling, and therefore practically speaking the price level could not be adequately regulated by decree.

As a consequence, increases in the price of basic foodstuffs seemed inevitable. These relentless increases, though, "have already today in industrial areas brought about events which contain within themselves great social dangers and call forth alarm on the part of the population, which the government cannot heedlessly dismiss."⁶²⁷ The privation of the poorer classes in non-agricultural areas such as Ostravsko was already well on its way to dire thanks to the

⁶²⁵AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Sep. 19, 1914/Hohes k.k. Ministerratspraesidium!

⁶²⁶AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Sep. 19, 1914/Hohes k.k. Ministerratspraesidium!

⁶²⁷AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Sep. 19, 1914/Hohes k.k. Ministerratspraesidium! Underline in the original.

unemployment crisis. The spiraling costs of basic foodstuffs were further endangering the physical well-being of the general population as well as putting pressure on the fixed stipend of the families of those workers conscripted.

Efforts to meet the need of the community on the part of the municipalities and even the industrial clubs and concerns in the district were undercut by a lack of resources, and the central government was as yet unresponsive. Industrial leaders went so far as to call for their taxes to be raised "insofar as practicable" in order to "meet the urgent needs of that portion of the population without means..."⁶²⁸ Aussig, however, saw this as only a temporary and inadequate palliative, and proposed two measures to alleviate the problem - first, he urged an opening of the borders for grain imports, and second, he demanded the imposition of a price ceiling for grains sold by the original producers as well as wholesale dealers. Despite the "measureless egoism of [the agrarian] interest group," which drove opposition to these measures, the municipal administration of Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau was unanimous in their belief that "the force of events will prove stronger than the resistance...expected by the esteemed government."⁶²⁹

Two weeks later, the City Council sent another missive to the Ministerial Council and the Agricultural Ministry attempting to reinforce Aussig's arguments. The suffering of the poorer elements of society had become unbearable after only two months of war, and individual attempts to regulate food prices by various municipalities had been useless in preventing such.⁶³⁰ The "monopoly position of the producers and wholesalers," which the City Council blamed for the relentless rise in food prices, had to be broken to prevent "illegitimate millions from being

⁶²⁸AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Sep. 19, 1914/Hohes k.k. Ministerratspraesidium!

⁶²⁹AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Sep. 19, 1914/Hohes k.k. Ministerratspraesidium!

⁶³⁰AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Oct. 3, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Lebensmittel Höchstpreise.

leached out of the [population]."⁶³¹ This was, again, best to be accomplished by imposing legal restrictions on wholesale prices and abolishing import duties on foodstuffs from abroad.

Public and administrative pressure to improve the food situation was not without effect. On September 14th, the governor of Moravia, Dr. Oktavian Bleyleben, ordered all merchants and dealers in Moravia to register their supplies of rye, barley, wheat, and oats including inventory purchased but not yet received with their local municipal office.⁶³² By October, provisioning problems had overcome Hungarian and Agrarian resistance to the abolition of import duties on foreign food imports, and the duty was duly eliminated on the 9th of October.⁶³³ Unfortunately, the main untapped source for food imports, Romania, imposed an export ban for grain and flour shortly thereafter and the tariff abolition had very little real impact.⁶³⁴ Public pressure continued to mount on government officials to take sharp action against speculators - a sarcastic article published the next day, on the 10th of October, reprinted articles 7 and 8 of the Imperial Decree of the 1st of August regarding punishment for profiteering under the title "Law Upon Which Enforcement We Await." The article ended with a sharp attack on speculators, large-scale producers, farmers, and millers - "against these, as also against all those foodstuff profiteers the harshness of this law ought be exercised."⁶³⁵

The approach of winter began to lead to more pronounced food worries. Poorer families

⁶³¹AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Oct. 3, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Lebensmittel Höchstpreise.

⁶³²AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 712/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Getreidevorräte-Aufnahme/Sep. 14, 1914/Zl. 9381 Präs./Kundmachung-Vyhláška.

⁶³³Hans Löwenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 48.

⁶³⁴Hans Löwenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 48.

⁶³⁵AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 10, 1914/86/3/Zákon na jehož provedení čekáme. *Proti těm, jakož i proti všem kdož lichváři s potravinami mělo by být použito ostří tohoto zákona.*

"await with terror what the coming cold months will bring with them in this direction. The price of flour rises higher every day, so that in poorer families it will not be possible to buy even bread."⁶³⁶ More terrifying than high prices, though, was the likelihood that "as in the cities, also in rural areas an insufficiency of bread and food will perhaps be appreciable in a short time."⁶³⁷ The general public was beginning to become concerned not only about the price of food but about the absolute quantity of food available to be consumed.

By November food prices had continued their relentless increase. At the end of July the wholesale price of a hundred kilograms of rye flour in Ostravsko was 38 crowns, but in November the price rose to fifty-three crowns. The figures for wheat flour for the same period were fifty crowns at the end of July and sixty-three crowns in November.⁶³⁸ The onset of winter and continuation of price increases and the accompanying privation among the working population impelled the City Council for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau to submit an urgent appeal (*Dringlichkeitsantrag*) to the central government on the 4th of November.

The municipality's various efforts to check increases in food prices had been, they argued, completely outweighed by the scale of the task. Without intervention at the highest levels of administration, further increases were inevitable. The nature of these recommended interventions is worthy of note. Unlike many of their previous petitions to the central administration, this appeal avoided demonizing producers or agricultural interests. By this point the council had moved beyond the picayune tinkering of their earlier policy suggestions as well. They "urgently recommended...the official registration of all manner of grain, flour, and other bulk products of

⁶³⁶AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 20, 1914/90/3/Venkov a drahoty potravin.

⁶³⁷AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 20, 1914/90/3/Venkov a drahoty potravin.

⁶³⁸AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 4, 1914/Dringlichkeitsantrag.

nature, as well as the legal declaration of the right of seizure of these supplies according to the War Production Law for the good of the State, the various provinces, and the municipalities, with the simultaneous imposition of a valid maximum price applicable to wholesalers and producers."⁶³⁹ They further hoped that the right to undertake such seizures (against compensation at the maximal price to be legally established) would extend to the provincial and municipal governments as well, and reach beyond the particular locale of any given municipality.

Mayor Gustav Fiedler two weeks later submitted another report on the subject of increasing food prices. In it, he pointed out that the approximately twenty-five percent increase in food prices seen since the beginning of the war more or less mirrored the increases in the prices of other necessary goods, and further that "the end of often entirely arbitrary price increases is not yet to be seen."⁶⁴⁰ Going further than earlier such missives to Vienna, Fiedler then called for the imposition of criminal sanctions as allowed for in articles seven and eight of the Imperial Decree of the 1st of August and the use of these sanctions to the fullest possible extent against the "great mill owners and wholesale dealers...who through the purchase of the original products have summoned forth an artificial and arbitrary boom [in the prices of] foodstuffs."⁶⁴¹

Though Fiedler recognized that the central administration had taken action to address increasing food prices, he regarded them as half-measures. Admittedly, among these half-measures was the abolition of import duties on foodstuffs, central to earlier calls for action. Other measures included registering and collecting food stockpiles and reductions in governmental and

⁶³⁹AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč. 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 4, 1914/Dringlichkeitsantrag.

⁶⁴⁰AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 17, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Abschrift.

⁶⁴¹AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 17, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Abschrift.

military use of rye and wheat flour, but none of these, he argued, would have any real effect without the imposition of strict legal limits on food prices throughout the production chain enforced by harsh criminal penalties. He closed by arguing "to assure the irreproachable provisioning of the urban population it is necessary to grant the municipalities the right to demand from the producers and dealers, if necessary also outside of their own region, foodstuffs at the officially set maximal price."⁶⁴²

After four months of war and increases in the prices of necessary goods (primarily foodstuffs) of some twenty-five percent over their immediate pre-war figures, the municipal government of Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau had significantly radicalized their position. At the beginning of the war, the council sought to ameliorate food shortages through the creation of their own stockpiles. The next step was the imposition of a price ceiling, undercut by wholesale pricing. The lifting of agricultural tariffs and the beginning of substitutions (the replacement of higher-quality foodstuffs such as white flour with adulterated and/or inferior ingredients) failed to stem the rise in food prices, and thus the municipal officials moved to advocating state seizure of food supplies wherever they might be found.

From the perspective of the central government in Vienna, however, the problem appeared somewhat differently. The most basic problem was that several of Fiedler and Aussig's assumptions were in error. First, the Monarchy was not in fact self-sufficient in food production. While it is true that before the outbreak of the First World War the Monarchy often produced more than enough food to cover its own consumption, this level of output nevertheless relied heavily on imported nitrate fertilizers as well as imported seasonal agricultural labor.⁶⁴³ Though

⁶⁴²AMO/744/Mob 26/Kč 711/Sig. Akte des Stadtvorstandes zu M.-Ostrau, Betrifft: Lebensmittelteuerung, 1914/Nov. 17, 1914/Zl. 6040/14/Abschrift.

⁶⁴³Hautmann, "Hunger is ein schlechter Koch," 665.

not relevant for 1914, the lack of nitrate-based fertilizers (with essentially all available nitrates redirected to armaments production) and agricultural labor (with a huge proportion of the pre-war workforce performing military service or otherwise unavailable for work) would substantially depress the 1915 harvest. Second, the impression that the 1914 harvest had been good was incorrect. Though the harvest had proceeded with the benefit of normal conditions, it had been a rather poor year and the result was insufficient to provide for domestic demand at pre-war levels.⁶⁴⁴ Third and most immediately critical was the widespread perception that rising food prices were primarily the result of the machinations of farmers and wholesalers to drive up prices for their own enrichment. Though circumstances undoubtedly contributed to a relative increase in economic well-being for producers of foodstuffs, the primary driver of inflation in food prices and the primary concern for the central government in Vienna was not the price increases themselves but the shortage in real terms of actual food to be had.⁶⁴⁵

In this context it is important to reiterate that the Habsburg state's peculiar constitutional arrangements meant that it was in practice two states governed separately, and that the decrees issued by the cabinet in Vienna had no independent validity in Transleithania unless endorsed by the Hungarian government in Budapest. The primarily agricultural economy of Transleithania, while a disadvantage in many ways during peacetime, gave the Magyar rulers in Budapest enormous leverage over their traditional enemies in Vienna. This presented the main obstacle to an imposition of price ceilings for producers or state seizure of agricultural products. In the first case, if Cisleithania had a maximum price and Transleithania did not have the same, then imports of foodstuffs from Hungary would necessarily cease altogether. In the second, of course, no

⁶⁴⁴Hans Löwenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 51.

⁶⁴⁵Hans Löwenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 49.

support or cooperation whatsoever could be expected from Budapest on a measure to dispossess Magyar landowners for the benefit of urban workers and citizens in Cisleithania.

Nevertheless, the two halves of the Monarchy managed to come to an agreement on a maximum price for agricultural products as well as a number of measures to promote the careful collection and management of available foodstuffs, concluded on the 28th of November, 1914.⁶⁴⁶ This agreement allowed price ceilings to be effectually deployed, and the Moravian Statthalter issued an announcement to take effect on the 10th of December, 1914, establishing price ceilings for the sale of grain and flour in Moravia. Affected were wheat, rye, barley, and corn, in both grain and flour versions. The maximum price for one hundred kilograms of wheat flour varied from sixty-nine and a half crowns to forty-eight crowns, seventy heller, depending on the quality of the flour - bread flour was the cheapest, and the price ceiling meant a reduction from the November wholesale price of sixty-three crowns to forty-eight crowns, seventy heller, while rye flour went from a floating price of fifty-three crowns to a fixed ceiling of forty-six crowns.⁶⁴⁷ Though no panacea, this did represent real progress in stabilizing the decline in real living conditions in the first winter of the war.

Following the November agreement, though, individual administrative regions in Hungary (*Komitate* in German, *megyék* in Hungarian) enacted their own export bans and similar measures to hinder transfer of their foodstuffs to Cisleithanian customers. Energetic representations to the Budapest government from Vienna for assistance in suppressing these illegal acts were largely ignored, and in January 1915 the Budapest government nationalized all available grain and flour supplies in Transleithania, to be administered by an Economic

⁶⁴⁶Hans Löwenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 50.

⁶⁴⁷AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 17, 1914/115/3/Nejvyšší ceny mouky.

Agricultural Commission (*Wirtschaftliche Landeskommission*).⁶⁴⁸ Soon after Tisza's government reduced grain shipments to Cisleithania from twenty-three million quintals to four million quintals, to ensure that Transleithanian grain consumption remained passable. Most of Hungary's grain surpluses were sold either to the German Empire for hard currency or industrial goods, or directly to the AOK, rather than to Cisleithania's civilian population.⁶⁴⁹

Budapest's decision to deploy food supplies as a weapon against Vienna led shortly to serious provisioning problems. In Ostravsko, the supply of grain for flour mills was down to only enough for a matter of days by December 1914, prompting calls for the state seizure of private supplies.⁶⁵⁰ In Cisleithania as a whole, Holger Herwig summarizes that "...food shortages began to arise in the larger cities by October 1914...By December bakers were instructed to add thirty per cent barley, rye, corn, and potato meal to wheat flour...On 11 May 1915 Vienna experienced its first food riots...beer brewing was sharply curtailed to save cereal grains...Vienna ran out of flour, potatoes, and fat by autumn 1915, while milk and butter could be obtained only at exorbitant prices."⁶⁵¹

The winter of 1915-1916 was not a good time to be a Habsburg subject, nor a good time to be a coal miner. The inhabitants of Ostravsko had endured the first winter of war, but the progressive deterioration of Habsburg harvests due to lack of labor, lack of imported nitrates for fertilizer, and the progressive tightening of the allied 'Hunger Blockade' led to increasing hardships. The 1915 potato harvest was only eighty-two percent of the 1913 figures, while wheat was at seventy-one percent of 1913 figures and rye was down to sixty-two percent. Barley and

⁶⁴⁸Hans Löwenfeld-Russ, *Die Regelung der Volksernährung im Kriege* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926) 50.

⁶⁴⁹Holger Herwig, *The First World War*. 277-278.

⁶⁵⁰AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Dec. 16, 1914/Zl. 15412/Getreidebeschaffung für Mühlen.

⁶⁵¹Holger Herwig, *The First World War*, 274.

oats were even worse, at forty-eight percent and forty-four percent respectively.⁶⁵²

In 1916, this picture deteriorated even more drastically. In raw numbers, "the total cereal crop in Austria fell from ninety-one million quintals in 1913 to forty-nine million in 1916 and to twenty-eight million one hundred thousand in 1917; in Hungary (including Croatia-Slavonia) it fell from one hundred and forty-six million quintals in 1913 to seventy-eight million in 1916, though it rose again to ninety-eight million quintals in 1917."⁶⁵³ For the Monarchy as a whole, this represented an enormous shortfall between what was needed and what was available. As Gary Shanafelt points out, "reliable figures were never achieved, but it has been estimated that even in 1914 the Monarchy was nine point eight million quintals short of meeting its own grain needs – a figure which increased to thirty-seven point one million for 1916."⁶⁵⁴ Neither were shortages limited to grain. In 1916 "the potato harvest came in at a dismal fifty million quintals, seventy-two million below the last peacetime figure. As a result, potatoes were rationed at two point two pounds per person per week..."⁶⁵⁵

Imports from abroad had become largely unavailable – some Romanian wheat could be purchased, but Germany was facing its own food crisis and Italy's entry into the war on May 23rd, 1915, cut off supplies through the peninsula. Hungary, being a far more agricultural economy than Austria, maintained a better standard of living for its citizens during the war but refused to sufficiently supply Austria. Hungary sent food shipments to Austria only grudgingly, and sought to wring as much as possible out of the Austrian government for them. Even the 1915 crop

⁶⁵²Hautmann, "Hunger is ein schlechter Koch," 665.

⁶⁵³Leo Valiani, *The End of Austria-Hungary* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1973) 177. One quintal is equal to two hundred and twenty pounds.

⁶⁵⁴Gary Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy*, 98.

⁶⁵⁵Holger Herwig, *The First World War*, 275.

failures failed to move the Hungarians.⁶⁵⁶ The cost of living in the entire Empire was also drastically increasing; by June 1916 the cost of living for working-class families such as those of coal miners inflation had increased the cost of living by two hundred and eighty-two percent.⁶⁵⁷

These general woes were compounded by regulatory shifts that choked off the mine district's ability to procure foodstuffs. Since the beginning of the war brought in its wake "limitless extortion" in terms of food prices, the pre-war practice of individual food purchase was no longer sufficient to supply the miners. Industrial concerns therefore undertook to provide for their workers' needs by purchasing foodstuffs in bulk from wherever possible and conveying them to industrial co-operatives, or consumer societies (*Konsumvereine*) which sold or provided the foodstuffs at cost directly to the workers. Up until the strike wave broke out, the office established for this purpose by the mining companies had spent one and a half million crowns on grains, fats, meat, and beans for their workers.⁶⁵⁸ All available avenues were exploited in order to acquire the necessary foodstuffs. The mining firms sent their purchasing agents abroad, across the German border into Upper Silesia, Congress Poland, or even Bavaria to purchase from the black market wherever possible, even trading shipments of coal under the table for shipments of food.⁶⁵⁹

This system worked as well as could be expected during a period of immense food

⁶⁵⁶Haselsteiner, "The Habsburg Empire in World War I: Mobilization of Food Supplies," 93. This is not to say that the Hungarian population was well-fed, but Hungary was consistently in a much better position to feed its population than Austria was.

⁶⁵⁷Richard Georg Plaschka, "The Army and Internal Conflict in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1918," in *East Central European Society in World War I*, ed. Béla Király and Nándor Dreisziger (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1985). 342.

⁶⁵⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Fragebogen I." April 5th, 1916. The situation was described by Senior Mine Councillor Fillunger, chairman of the Director's Conference for the Ostrava-Karviná coal basin, in response to a series of questions posed by Jaroslav Petr, representing Military Command Kraków.

⁶⁵⁹*Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 214-215. The covert coal trading was almost certainly undertaken with the government's implicit consent.

shortages, but it relied crucially on the possibility of purchasing and shipping food from other districts and states. The imposition of rationing and food controls in April 1915, though, threatened that possibility.⁶⁶⁰ The Imperial and Royal government, in an attempt to rationalize supply, decreed on the 16th of September, 1915, that all foodstuffs brought into the Monarchy must go through the newly erected War Provisions Transfer Agency (*Kriegsgetreideverkehrsanstalt*), cutting Ostrava-Karviná off from what German supplies were available. The progressively worsening food crisis also impelled other counties and districts within the Monarchy to enact export bans on foodstuffs.⁶⁶¹ These bans created “enormous difficulties” in the provisioning process and left Ostrava-Karviná dangerously undersupplied.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶⁰Hautmann, “Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch,” 667. Rationing for bread and flour introduced in April 1915, for sugar in March 1916, for milk in May 1916, coffee in June 1916, and fat in Sept. 1916.

⁶⁶¹Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs*, 96; *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 214.

⁶⁶²ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61-46/6, Nr. 5. “Bericht.” Jaroslav Petr, April 6th, 1916.

The Politics of Resistance

The initial period of the war brought about wide-reaching changes in the conditions of labor, in individual rights, in the rules of political and social engagement, and a general decline in compensation and the standard of living for the industrial population of Ostravsko. Under other circumstances, these changes would have brought the entire Cisleithanian population into the streets, but mobilizations and battles operated as a kind of paralytic on the body politic. Patriotism, fear, confusion, and the decisions of political organizations to cooperate with the state imposed significant obstacles for demonstrations of public dissatisfaction or opposition.

Dissent and dissatisfaction nevertheless bubbled up in the first months of the war. A spontaneous wildcat strike broke out on the 6th of August at Count Vilček's coal operations at the Emma shaft, in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau. The outbreak of the war and ensuing emergency measures offered mine management a golden opportunity to renegotiate wages and work conditions, and both working hours and wages were quickly and systematically reduced. At the early morning shift change on the 6th, the haulers and wagoners struck as a consequence of their insufficient wages and the disrespect shown them and their claims by the mine leadership.⁶⁶³ Only forty-three of the hundred and three workers assigned to the early shift struck, but mine management sent the entire shift home as a collective punishment.⁶⁶⁴ Worker solidarity collapsed after only a day, and on the 8th of August work resumed as normal.⁶⁶⁵ Count Vilček's mining operations had not been militarized, and thus no military intervention occurred, but prevailing conditions nevertheless so favored management that the strike could not be maintained for any real length

⁶⁶³AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 12, 1914/č. 32/5/Jáma Emma v Pol. Ostravě.

⁶⁶⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 603/Aug. 6, 1914/A.N.[Amtsnotiz]Telephon. Gespr.

⁶⁶⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 156/Sig. 603/Aug. 8, 1914/Zl. 1699ad/Pr. 603/2/Arbeiterstreik am Emmaschachte in Poln. Ostrau Beendigung.

of time.

Another strike action took place at the end of October, at the Vítkovice Steelworks. A group of workers ceased work due to "unending reductions in piecework wages on the part of Steelworks engineer Pavelko."⁶⁶⁶ The workers returned to work on the strength of a Directorate promise that "matters would be improved" and higher wages would be forthcoming. This episode was a disquieting example of a broader trend at the Steelworks, where "some departments are exceptionally manned, are working flat out by day and by night, so that orders can be managed. And the leadership of the factory exploit [such] through reducing wages."⁶⁶⁷ Secretary Hueber had foreseen just such a possibility in his earlier declaration to the Union of Austrian Miners.⁶⁶⁸

The new circumstances brought about by the war were widely abused. Worker leaders Alojzy Bonczek and Petr Cingr in December 1914 highlighted complaints regarding the behavior of the Austrian Mining and Steelworks Corporation's Hohenegger mine leadership, "where a terrible punishment system and collective harassment of the mining workers was introduced."⁶⁶⁹ Other complaints were leveled regarding the Directorate for the Count Larisch-Mönnich mining operations in Karviná/Karwin, which reportedly had been refusing to dispense the allotted coal disbursement to the wives of conscripted miners.⁶⁷⁰

There were instances of apparently serious resistance which went beyond brief strikes or complaints to politicians. The Railroad Ministry reported on the 10th of November that

⁶⁶⁶AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 31, 1914/95/3/Stávka ve vítkovických železárnách.

⁶⁶⁷AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Oct. 31, 1914/95/3/Stávka ve vítkovických železárnách.

⁶⁶⁸AMO/NN10/7 Inv. c. 534/Na zdar/Aug. 12, 1914/č. 32/1/Odborovým důvěrníkům v Rakousku.

⁶⁶⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 157/Sig. 823/Dec. 4, 1914/Betr: Verschärfung des...

⁶⁷⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 157/Sig. 823/Dec. 4, 1914/Betr: Verschärfung des...

subversive fliers had been found among rail workers, urging collective action to end the war.⁶⁷¹

An exemplar of the fliers offered an impassioned attack on the war and plea to take action:

Citizens! It is on us to put a finish on the present murders, and this can happen through a quiet [*stille*] strike, everyone resign from work, call in sick, cut back [at work], it is better to suffer from hunger than to be maimed. Citizens, rescue yourselves and your relatives. No one wait, it doesn't matter, that someone makes an end, so long as humanity will not be murdered, see the signs, everyone will become a soldier. Everyone, open your eyes, so long as it is still time, prevail over your surroundings. Hunger and exigency will come, the sooner the better. Salvation is in us, people, be sane, we want an end. Pass it along!⁶⁷²

In response, the state placed four Czech-nationalist organizations of rail workers under surveillance.⁶⁷³

The prevention or suppression of political activity continued to be high on the military's agenda. On the 3rd of December, 1914, Captain of the Cavalry Josef Woitsch issued an order to the Police Directorate in which all soldiers and militia workers, including those liable though not mobilized between the ages of nineteen and forty-two were banned from participation in public gatherings without specific permission.⁶⁷⁴ Political or organizational activity struck the authorities as even more suspicious, as they believed (on the testimony of a Russian prisoner of war) that dozens of Czech Legionnaires had volunteered for espionage duty along the frontier, not far from Ostravsko.⁶⁷⁵

Military courts handed down a number of decisions that made it into the press in December. Two miners had been brought before the military court for having failed to appear at

⁶⁷¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 159/Sig. 192/Nov. 10, 1914/Pr. 907/A.E.

⁶⁷²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 159/Sig. 192/Nov. 29, 1914/Z.Zl. 15715/Pr. 907/2/Übersetzung des Aufrufes.

⁶⁷³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 159/Sig. 192/Nov. 27, 1914/Zl. 13620/Pr. 907/Überwachung der tschechischen Eisenbahner Organisationen. The organizations were: *Spolek českých úředníků železničních*, *Zemská jednota zřízců drah v království Českém*, *Právní ochrana*, and *Československý svaz železničních zřízců v Rakousku*.

⁶⁷⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 158/Sig. 984/Dec. 3, 1914/Zl. 267/Pr. 984/Versammlungen, Verbot.

⁶⁷⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 159/Sig. 219/Jan. 19, 1915/Zl. 843/Pr. 219/Kundschaftsdienst czechischer Legionare.

work on the 20th of August, the mines having been claimed as war production facilities. Both were arrested the next day and held for three months. When finally brought before the court, they received four months and three months of hard labor respectively.⁶⁷⁶ Also coming before the court was Alois Schmied, the seventeen year old with limited language skills addressed earlier.⁶⁷⁷

On the 8th of December, the military court in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau ruled the tailor Evžen Matějka guilty of disturbing the public peace, as he had expressed himself in a russophile and anti-Austrian manner, attempted to incite hostility against the unity of the state. He was further found guilty of *lèse-majesté* in the course of such disturbance of the public peace. His sentence was death by firing squad. The sentence was carried out on the 9th of December at 10:00 AM.⁶⁷⁸

On the 29th, *Duch času* reported on the recent activities of the "summary military court [*Vojenský náhlý soud*] in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau," which had recently "condemned several individuals to death for treasonous utterances according to martial law, and the condemned individuals were shot shortly after sentence was pronounced."⁶⁷⁹ Among the dead was the metalworker Josef Kotek, sentenced for "some utterance, which qualified as treasonous."⁶⁸⁰ The reporter continued, "One shudders in horror over peoples' lack of caution and wisdom, who for an imprudent utterance risk their own lives...when they are themselves aware, how severely courts-martial judge."⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁶AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 5, 1914/110/1-2/Horníci před vojenským soudem.

⁶⁷⁷AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 5, 1914/110/1-2/Horníci před vojenským soudem.

⁶⁷⁸AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 19, 1914/116/2/Popravy dle stanného práva v Mor. Ostravě a v Těšíně.

⁶⁷⁹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 29, 1914/119/3-4/Opět poprava v M. Ostravě.

⁶⁸⁰AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 29, 1914/119/3-4/Opět poprava v M. Ostravě. ...nějaký výrok, jež byl kvalifikován jako velezrádný.

⁶⁸¹AMO/ND 9/139/620/Duch času/Dec. 29, 1914/119/3-4/Opět poprava v M. Ostravě. Člověka jímá přímo hrůza

Stalagmites and Stalactites all the Live Long Day: Work Hours Extension

In February, the Ministry of Public Works found that "wintertime and the requirement of coal for the prosecution of the war demonstrates increased coal requirements, which cannot be met by the current decreasing number of workers by normal mining."⁶⁸² As a consequence, "it is necessary to be mining on Sunday and on holidays, or by lengthening working shifts for coal mining...so that the required amounts of coal are procured."⁶⁸³ A deputation of worker leaders from Ostravsko, consisting of Petr Cingr, Tadeusz Reger, Vojtěch Brda, Josef Koukal, and Georg Kantor, met with Emil Homann-Herimberg at the Ministry of Public Works in Vienna on the 3rd of February, where they were informed of the new policy. There was, it seems, some confusion as to the terms of the change, however - the members of the worker delegations returned with the impression that the workers had the right to decide which they would prefer, whereas the mining companies understood the decision as being in their own hands.⁶⁸⁴

As a consequence of this ministerial directive, a number of mine operations extended shift hours, including the Nordbahn's Franz shaft which extended shift hours from nine to eleven hours. The men assigned to the morning shift were apprised of this new development as they arrived at 6:00 AM, leading to two hundred and eighteen of the two hundred and fifty-six miners immediately going on strike.⁶⁸⁵ The District Mining Office (*Revierbergamt*), the regulatory

nad neopatrností a nerozumem lidí, kteří pro nerozvážený výrok risikují vlastní život...kdyby si byli vědomi, jak přísně stanný soud soudí.

⁶⁸²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 7. 1915/Pr. 389/Delegátům Báňského Společenstva Ostravsko-Karvinského Revíru!

⁶⁸³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 7. 1915/Pr. 389/Delegátům Báňského Společenstva Ostravsko-Karvinského Revíru!

⁶⁸⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 7. 1915/Pr. 389/Delegátům Báňského Společenstva Ostravsko-Karvinského Revíru!

⁶⁸⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 8, 1915/Pr. 389/Bericht.

authority for the district's mining operation, hastily revoked their authorization of the Franz shaft administration's decree, "in regard to the circumstances, as on the part of the Ministry for Public Works a conscious understanding with the workforce about the introduction [of the policy]"⁶⁸⁶

On the 11th of February, however, the Nordbahn Directorate informed the District Mining Office in writing that the Imperial and Royal Military Command had countermanded the Mining Office; the Military Command "had decreed the strict implementation of the eleven hour shift at the mines," and the Nordbahn's mining operations would thus implement extended shifts.⁶⁸⁷

Police Councillor Kunz, on receipt of the news, acted quickly to forestall the outbreak of more strikes. He detailed Gendarme detachments and police officials to each of the Nordbahn mines for the next day, the 12th. Perhaps as a result of his quick action, the early shift unfolded without incident, though matters worsened that afternoon. The afternoon shift at the Nordbahn's Heinrich shaft declared their displeasure with the extended shift, and "stávka", "strike," appeared as graffiti on the walls. The military then stepped in; a detachment of "about fifty men...ordered that all workers would be forced to begin work...partially coluntarily, partially involuntarily all of the fifty-seven workers together departed under the pressure of military force."⁶⁸⁸

The head of the District Mining Office, Dr. Franz Aggerman, meanwhile sought to bring about a reversal of this presumptuous and unnecessary military intervention by appealing to Vienna. The reply he received from the Ministry of Home Defense was not, however, promising - "once distributed, orderes of the Military Command were unchangeable and would under the

⁶⁸⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 13, 1915/Pr. 423/Parzieller Streik am Heinrichschachte in M.-Ostrau.

⁶⁸⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 13, 1915/Pr. 423/Parzieller Streik am Heinrichschachte in M.-Ostrau.

⁶⁸⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 13, 1915/Pr. 423/Parzieller Streik am Heinrichschachte in M.-Ostrau.

circumstances be implemented through armed force."⁶⁸⁹ The Imperial-Royal Militia Division Command further issued a declaration to the workforce, reading:

It is hereby made known, that...the telephonically received notification of the Imperial-Royal Militia Division Command regarding the introduction of the eleven hour shift for the mining workforce absolutely must be complied with. As the workers are partially sworn as militia, partially conscripted for labor under the War Production Law, they are subordinated to military discipline and judicature and have therefore in the case of a refusal of ordered work – which would be regarded as mutiny – [to] expect the sharpest measures against them.⁶⁹⁰

As a further consequence of this affair, the Police Commissariat and the Army moved to tighten supervision of miner activity and further curtail political activity in Ostravsko. The blame for the partial strikes and sullen resistance following introduction of extended working hours was placed at the door of Vojtěch Brda, Secretary of the Union of Austrian Miners. The Police Commissariat quickly banned meetings for the Union of Austrian Miners. It also suppressed their activities, revoking their legal right to intervene in negotiations between employers and employees or to intervene on behalf of their membership before government bodies in order to remedy improprieties or illegalities.⁶⁹¹

Brda himself was also sactioned. According to the order delivered to him, "1: It is forbidden to you [Brda] until this order is withdrawn for you to call gatherings, public or secret,

⁶⁸⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 13, 1915/Pr. 423/Parzieller Streik am Heinrichschachte in M.-Ostrau.

⁶⁹⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 12, 1915/Kundmachung.

⁶⁹¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 18, 1915/Pr. 439/8/An den Verein "Union der Bergarbeiter Österreichs."

and to speak at gatherings called by others. 2: It is forbidden to you to intervene in any concerns of the workers, be it a question of wages, labor hours, or other, in any way. The violation of this ban would have as a consequence not only the punishment given in the cited decree...but also your administrative imprisonment and removal from the police district for the duration of the war."⁶⁹²

Military Command Kraków issued a request to the Police Commissariat on the 13th of February in which it identified the root of the uproar in Brda's intervention, as he (apparently accurately) conveyed the information he received from the responsible official (Homann-Herimberg) at the Ministry of Public Works to the miners in Ostravsko that he represented. Action against Brda would only cut off part of the problem, as "through the uproar over this event it became known, that on last Sunday in the afternoon in the Steiner guesthouse in Přívoz/Oderfurt...a secret miner meeting took place."⁶⁹³ Heightened scrutiny, therefore, was needed, and thus "it is requested, in the interest of the maintenance of public peace and order, that the holding of such secret meetings be placed under increased attention and guesthouses and establishments frequented by miners...be strictly watched."⁶⁹⁴ Military Command Kraków had several weeks earlier moved to ban worker participation in even those meetings with a purely administrative economic character, and this represented yet another step in the pursuit of rendering the workers of Ostravsko atomistic, apolitical, and interchangeable individuals.⁶⁹⁵

By June, the Army was completely fed up. General of the Infantry Ludwig Matuschka,

⁶⁹²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 18, 1915/Pr. 439/8/An Herrn Adalbert Brda...

⁶⁹³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 13, 1915/Zl. 3769/L/Streikbewegung im Kohlenrevier M. Ostrau.

⁶⁹⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 13, 1915/Zl. 3769/L/Streikbewegung im Kohlenrevier M. Ostrau.

⁶⁹⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Feb. 4, 1915/Amtsnotiz. The order itself was: Kundmachung I.A. 755/11, k.k. Militärkommando Landwehrgruppe Kraków in M. Ostr.

Commandant of Military Command Kraków, wrote to Captain Johann Gebauer, at the time Military Leader for the Vítkovice Steelworks, regarding imposing harsher measures on workers. The War Ministry, he began, had been abundantly informed "that the conduct of the workers at numerous industrial enterprises, which have been claimed under the War Production Law, in disciplinary and moral respects are extraordinarily bad."⁶⁹⁶ An entire range of offenses had long been frustrating Matuschka and his entire command. "Insubordinations, impudences, revolt [*Auflehnung*] against the masters and leaders of operations, passive resistance, willful damaging of working machinery, unauthorized departures from workplaces etc. are delicts, against which also the application of disciplinary punishment actions has proven ineffectual."⁶⁹⁷

The War Ministry, in response to the perceived ineffectuality of the punishments deployed, naturally sought to sharpen the legal penalties exacted. Rather than handling matters administratively at the worksite, "in such cases judicial penalties are to be applied without fail. The punishments foreseen in these cases are to be recommended..."⁶⁹⁸ The terms of detention given by the courts had additional advantages for his purposes, as "the convict receives during detention no wages, so that the judicial judgement specifically in such cases is allowed to be a most effective means of terrorization and improvement."⁶⁹⁹ In cases where workers liable to army service were judged to be ringleaders in a judicially punishable disturbance, "following successful completion of their sentence [they were] no longer to participate in the concern, but

⁶⁹⁶AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Jun. 19, 1915/Zl. 22141/19000/L/Strafverschärfungen für Arbeiter der unter Kriegsleistungsgesetz stehenden Betriebe.

⁶⁹⁷AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Jun. 19, 1915/Zl. 22141/19000/L/Strafverschärfungen für Arbeiter der unter Kriegsleistungsgesetz stehenden Betriebe.

⁶⁹⁸AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Jun. 19, 1915/Zl. 22141/19000/L/Strafverschärfungen für Arbeiter der unter Kriegsleistungsgesetz stehenden Betriebe.

⁶⁹⁹AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Jun. 19, 1915/Zl. 22141/19000/L/Strafverschärfungen für Arbeiter der unter Kriegsleistungsgesetz stehenden Betriebe. *ein höchst wirksamstes Abschreckungs- und Besserungsmittel sein dürfte.*

instead on the part of the military leader of the affected undertaking to locate the nearest Replacement Command and give over [the convict] for the purpose of enlistment in the appropriate military unit."⁷⁰⁰ These men were additionally to be trained and transferred in such a way as to ensure that they would "participate in the next marching battalion," reaching the fighting front in an expeditious manner.⁷⁰¹ To ensure the successful terrorization of the workforce, this decree was to be made known to the workers by the military leadership for each concern as well as through appropriate publications.

By Autumn 1915, Ostravsko had taken on something of the feel of an occupied territory. Nine Militia Labor Commands (*Landsturmabteilungskommandos*) encompassed all of the mining and coking operations in the district. Two commands were headquartered in Karviná/Karwin, two in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, one in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, two in Dombrova/Dombrau, one in Poruba/Porembo, and one in Michalkovice/Michalkowitz. Each command disposed of between twenty-four and forty-five armed security personnel, and together disposed of almost three hundred men permanently stationed in mine shafts and coking works across Ostravsko.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Jun. 19, 1915/Zl. 22141/19000/L/Strafverschärfungen für Arbeiter der unter Kriegsleistungsgesetz stehenden Betriebe.

⁷⁰¹AVZ/VHHT/646/3676/Jun. 19, 1915/Zl. 22141/19000/L/Strafverschärfungen für Arbeiter der unter Kriegsleistungsgesetz stehenden Betriebe.

⁷⁰²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1512/Oct. 9, 1915/Der k.k. Landsturm-Arbeiter Kommandos im Ostrauer-Karwiner Kohlenrevier.

King Coal

By the beginning of 1916, coal shortages were becoming dire. Demand for anthracite for Austrian iron and steel production alone had increased by almost four million tons over the 1914 figure, and one of the coldest winters on record spiked demand for heating coal throughout the Monarchy.⁷⁰³ Despite reduced effectiveness, the Austrian railroad system consumed almost half a million tons more coal in 1916 than in 1913.⁷⁰⁴ The Hungarian half of the Monarchy began to experience industrial slowdowns due to coal shortages, and these slowdowns would later blossom into full-fledged industrial stoppages and widespread unemployment.⁷⁰⁵

Coal shortages, like food shortages, could not be easily remedied through purchases from foreign markets. It would seem that coal would be less problematic than other commodities, as the vast majority of the coal necessary to cover the difference between domestic production and demand was imported from German mines in Upper Silesia.⁷⁰⁶ After the imposition of the British blockade, however, German coal demand could no longer be met from more convenient sources in northern France and Britain, and Germany was thrown back to relying solely on domestic

⁷⁰³Riedl, *Die Industrie Österreichs*, 275. Iron and steel industry figures are 21.6 million tons for 1914 and 25.4 million tons for 1916.

⁷⁰⁴Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, XXXIX. 7,803,000 tons in 1913 v 8,470,859 tons in 1916.

⁷⁰⁵Peter Pastor, "The Home Front in Hungary, 1914-1918," in *East Central European Society in World War I*, ed. Béla Király and Nándor Dreisziger (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1985). 128.

⁷⁰⁶Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, 6.

supplies for coal. Shipments from Silesia never entirely stopped, but they were sharply curtailed. German imports plummeted after the outbreak of war and never recovered.⁷⁰⁷ These unpleasant realities looked even more threatening when juxtaposed with the Austrian production figures, which showed a net increase of approximately 1.3 million tons of anthracite in 1916 over 1913 and a drop of no less than 4.1 million tons of lignite produced over the same period.⁷⁰⁸

The difficulty of increasing anthracite imports from Germany, the anemic increase in domestic production, and the vastly increasing demand all conspired to ensure that maintaining production became a top priority. In this environment, the coal miners as a group took on a vastly increased importance relative to their peacetime role. Pre-war expectations of a short war had been thoroughly disappointed, and the victor, it seemed, would be decided more by productive capacity than by brilliant generalship. Control over the labor of Ostravsko's industrial workers, then, became an even more critical strategic asset.

The Strike Wave

The industrial district's Directoral Conference first brought the worsening supply crisis to the attention of the central government with the submission of a report of to the Ministry of Public Works on the 24th of February, 1916. Bread shortages had already set in, and no improvement was in sight. Such a state of events, they wrote, would not only decrease coal production but also put pressure on the “disciplined and until now irreproachably patriotic orientation of the labor force...”⁷⁰⁹ The Directoral Conference was correct that privation was

⁷⁰⁷Ibid., 7. German anthracite imports dropped nearly three million tons in 1914, and further in 1915, representing a drop of approximately thirty percent from pre-war figures.

⁷⁰⁸Homann-Herimberg, *Die Kohlenversorgung in Österreich*, II-III. For anthracite – 16,336,604 tons in 1913 v 17,601,711 in 1916. For lignite – 27,461,632 tons in 1913 v 23,199,896 tons in 1916.

⁷⁰⁹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(47). "Direktoren-Konferenz des Ostrau-Karwiner Steinkohlenrevieres." February 24th, 1916.

quickly breaking down the workers' labor discipline.⁷¹⁰ Though, as previously discussed, strikes had occurred in Ostravsko during the previous years of the war, these had been of limited duration and involved only small numbers of workers. The same could not be said of the future.

The forecasts had not been sufficiently pessimistic, and by the end of March some mine workers had been reduced to consuming the slop set aside for pigs.⁷¹¹ No betterment in the provisioning situation was expected, the work remained strenuous, and the starving miners had reached their limit, despite the draconian penalties for protest. The strikes began in the Silesian area of Ostravsko, on Friday, the 31st of March. Forty-seven hungry pushcart operators (*Hundstößer*) and signalmen (*Anschläger*) working the early shift at the Salm shaft refused to enter the mine and begin their back-breaking labor. These workers later persuaded the hewers working the afternoon shift to lay down their tools and join their strike.⁷¹²

A frantic telephone report was sent to the Military Station Command for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau along with an urgent request for military support. Depending on the interpretation, these workers were guilty of either insubordination, in refusing commands to work, or treason, in abandoning their posts. The head of the Military Station Command, Franz Brandstätter, responded with eighty men under his own command, and found when he arrived that the nearby Ludwig and Wetter shafts had also joined the strike – two hundred workers refused to begin work at the Ludwig shaft, and an unknown number at Wetter. Negotiations with the Ludwig workers failed, but “as the workers would not resume work willingly, their entry into the mine was *insisted upon*.”⁷¹³ By the time Brandstätter's detachment had persuaded the Ludwig

⁷¹⁰Huemos, “Kartoffeln her,” 260.

⁷¹¹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(Präs. 1658/L). “Bericht.” April 9th, 1916.

⁷¹²ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). “Bericht des k.k. Oblt.-Auditor Dr. Michael Eckstein über seine Amtshandlung in Mähr.-Ostrau.” April 5th, 1916. 47 men were involved at the Salm shaft at this stage.

⁷¹³Ibid., emphasis mine. “Da die Arbeit freiwillig nicht aufgenommen wurde, wurde darauf bestanden, daß eingefahren wird.”

workers of the inadvisability of continuing in their strike action, the workers from the Wetter shaft had fled the area.

Following receipt of the news, Military Command Kraków sent the Coal Cadre Inspector for Ostrava-Karviná, Captain of the Gendarmarie Cavalry Josef Woitsch, to the site. As the plenipotentiary representative of the Military Command, Woitsch was entrusted with quashing labor unrest throughout the entire industrial district. This would not, however, be an easy task. By the next day, April 1st, 1916, the strikes at the Salm, Wetter, and Ludwig shafts had gained considerable popular sympathy, and Woitsch acted quickly to stamp out the spark before it could spread further. An additional one and a half companies of infantry were dispatched and sizeable patrols were sent to track down striking workers, drag them from their homes, and drive them into their mine shafts, there to be billeted (*kaserniert*) in the mine. Woitsch's forces imprisoned approximately three hundred workers this way.

The sparks, though, had flown wide, and the strikes continued to spread. The next evening three additional shafts struck - the Johann-Maria, the Dreifaltigkeit, and the Michaelis shafts. Another half-company of infantry was brought in to suppress them, and Woitsch dispatched more patrols to break down striking miners' doors, haul them to their mine shafts, and pen them there. Then the Hermengild shaft struck, on the 3rd of April. By then, 38 miners were under formal military arrest, either in the coal district or *en route* to Těšín/Teschen for a military tribunal. Hundreds more were living in coal shafts under armed guard. Two companies of infantry occupied seven mine shafts, and the strike wave had not yet reached the Moravian half of the district. On the 4th of April, this was no longer the case, as forty-seven youth laborers refused to enter the Alexander shaft, eighty-three men refused to work at the Franz shaft, and another one hundred and thirty-five men assigned to the afternoon shift joined them. The entire

afternoon shift at the Georg shaft put down their tools and took up the strike, and minor disturbances marred the change of shifts at the Ignaz shaft.⁷¹⁴ To further discommode authorities, an infantryman engaged in suppressing the strike, the former worker Alexander Pollaczek of Militia Regiment 31, was arrested and imprisoned for sedition.⁷¹⁵

The 4th of April was the high-water mark for the active stage of the strike wave. Eleven shafts and thousands of men had thrown down their tools by then, and scores were under arrest for high treason with hundreds more held at bayonet point in their mine shafts. The next week was not so heated. There were occasional demonstrations, such as at the Tiefbau shaft and the Alpine shaft on the 8th. The afternoon shift at the Louis shaft refused to work on the 10th, but after a heated exchange with their cadre commander the majority of the miners resumed work peacefully. A number of workers, typically youths, were arrested during each of these incidents.⁷¹⁶ The military had broken the back of the protests.

This is not to say that labor unrest in the Ostrava-Karwiná industrial district had ended, but this particular strike movement had ended. Passive resistance in the form of sharply reduced productivity and reluctance to work sharply reduced coal output while avoiding more easily punishable demonstrations or absenteeism.⁷¹⁷ This transition was likely the result of Woitsch's campaign of terror against the striking workers, but there is no definitive evidence of this available. Complaints, threats, and rumors were rampant, though, and the authorities nervously hoped that they could stamp out the fuse before it reached the powder keg.

The District Commissioner for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau brought rumors of a general

⁷¹⁴Ibid.

⁷¹⁵ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht des k.k. Oblt.-Auditor Dr. Michael Eckstein über seine Amtshandlung in Mähr.-Ostrau." April 5th, 1916.

⁷¹⁶ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1-1/3(9). "Bericht." April 11th, 1916.

⁷¹⁷ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Ach, April 9th, 1916.

strike, to be called on Monday, April 10th, to the attention of Military Command Kraków and the Police Directorate on the 8th of April.⁷¹⁸ The foreman of the Theresien shaft received an anonymous letter on the 9th demanding the release of the arrested miners and threatening a general strike. A duration of fourteen days was set for a reply, and the message was signed by "all old mining folk".⁷¹⁹ The same day another anonymous letter was received by the Coal Cadre Commandant of the Kohen-Ecker shaft, demanding general wage increases. The letter concluded with the bold claim that "Martial law does not impress us, as mining folk do not fear death by execution."⁷²⁰

It is important to note here that the workers under discussion were not organized. Though information and encouragement undoubtedly passed through more or less informal networks of acquaintance and interaction, this strike wave began spontaneously, spread spontaneously, and reflected an inarticulate expression of mass sentiment rather than a calculated attempt to exercise economic pressure on behalf of a particular program. The miner's union organization, the Union of Austrian Miners (*Unie horniků rakouských*) appears to have had nothing to do with the strikes at any stage, and indeed may have sought to prevent or stem the expansion of the strike wave in keeping with organized labor's broader war-time strategy and reflecting police bans on Brda's and the Union's activities. Demands received by Habsburg officials thus reflected only the particular feelings of whoever was communicating them.

These various demands received by state authorities were by and large not unreasonable. Some requested or demanded the release of their imprisoned comrades, but mostly they called on

⁷¹⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Ach, April 8th, 1916; ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6 "Telefondepesche an das Mil. Kmdo Krakau." April 8th, 1916.

⁷¹⁹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1-1/3(9). "Bericht." Novák, April 9th, 1916. *Alle alten Bergleute*.

⁷²⁰Ibid.

state authorities to more adequately compensate them for their dangerous and backbreaking labor.⁷²¹ Some requests were also received for cheaper food. In one such case, the demand cited an inability to maintain coal output at their current negligible caloric input for more than a week.⁷²² This was likely true, as labor-intensive occupations such as mining required workers to consume at least three thousand, nine hundred calories daily in order to maintain their strength.⁷²³ The Police Directorate, however, understood it as a threat to undertake passive resistance.⁷²⁴ Most written demands, though, related only to wage increases. Given the basis for the strikes, and the informal opinions collected by various government investigators, though, it is very likely that wage demands were advanced as a proxy for direct provisioning rather than for their own sake.⁷²⁵ Whether such was a conscious strategy, a reflection of lack of faith in government provisioning, or simply habit remains speculative.

Wages had increased between twelve and fourteen percent for all positions from the beginning of the war to the outbreak of the strikes, an increase which “bore no proportion to the price increases for all necessary articles, amounting to one hundred and fifty to two hundred percent” over pre-war figures.⁷²⁶ Considering the inflation figures, the miners' various wage demands were in fact quite moderate, especially as draconian punishments for insubordination and protest had been consistently exercised to short-circuit demands for higher wages since the

⁷²¹One such instance was reported at the Theresa shaft, where a general uprising was threatened if fifteen imprisoned workers from their shaft were not released. See ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Novák, April 10th, 1916.

⁷²²ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Ach, April 9th, 1916.

⁷²³Hautmann, “Hunger ist ein schlechter Koch,” 669.

⁷²⁴ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Ach, April 9th, 1916.

⁷²⁵See for example Jaroslav Petr's summary of worker's demands “collected from conversations with workers of various coal mines”, which focuses almost exclusively on provisioning. ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht." Jaroslav Petr, April 6th, 1916.

⁷²⁶ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7). "Ad Erlass Prä. No. 6645-IV." April 12th, 1916.

beginning of the war.⁷²⁷ The average pre-war (1913) wage for a miner in the Ostrava-Karviná district was five and a third crowns a day.⁷²⁸ The wage demands at the Georg shaft, for example, were only for a wage of seven and a half crowns per shift for miners, hand workers, senior machine operators, senior stokers, and similarly situated workers; five to five and a half crowns a shift for junior machine operators, junior stokers, and the like; and for unskilled labor a wage of three and a half to four crowns a shift. The workers at the Francis shaft submitted similar demands, for wages between three and a half and seven and a half crowns daily, as well as a "War Bonus" (*Kriegszugabe*) of seventeen percent.⁷²⁹ For purposes of comparison, Josef Woitsch estimated that lodging and upkeep (*Kost und Quartier*) was at this time at between eighty and ninety crowns a month.⁷³⁰ All told, their demands constituted an increase of slightly more than fifty percent over the pre-war 1914 figures.⁷³¹ The Ostrava-Karviná labor force did not ask for much.

The most serious move to placate the miners through concessions took place on the 9th of April, 1916. A ministerial conference took place in Vienna, under the aegis of the Ministry of Public Works, aiming to resolve the strike movement. News of the outcome of the conference had reached Ostrava-Karviná by that evening, and the ministers' concessions were singularly unimpressive. The collected ministers had conceded an additional nine percent wage increase across the board, which brought the total wage increases over the course of the war to between twenty-one and twenty-four percent, depending on the position. This increase was only wrung

⁷²⁷C.f. AMO/ND 9/139/Duch času/620/Nov. 14, 1914/101/2/Ostravsko v době válečné; *Die Regelung der Arbeitsverhältnisse*, 189.

⁷²⁸"Lohnsteigerung in Industrie und Landwirtschaft," *Neue Freie Presse*, Jan. 1st, 1918, Morgenblatt.

⁷²⁹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Novák, April 10th, 1916.

⁷³⁰ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Antrag des militärischen Delegierten des Militärkommandos." Undated.

⁷³¹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(3). "Bericht." April 7th, 1916.

out of the mining concerns through pressure from the Ministry of Public Works, which conceded a ten percent increase in the allowed price for a cubic meter of coal to compensate the mining concerns for the increased payroll costs.

In addition, the conference slightly relaxed the rigid discipline under which the miners labored, though only superficially. The limits on absenteeism were relaxed, in so far as that one could be absent for two full shifts per month before monetary penalties were imposed, and more numerous instances of absenteeism only brought the loss of half of one's supplemental war payment. The previous limit had been sharper, as one absentee shift would be forgiven before the worker forfeited the entirety of their monthly supplemental payment, but the new regulations could not be seen as major concessions to the workers' demands.⁷³²

The transition from penury and starvation to nothing much more than penury and starvation was not a compelling one, especially as there was no real prospect of a loosening of the harsh military regime which ruled the district. The State Police Bureau reported that the workers assigned to the Luis shaft “declared themselves in disagreement with the nine percent increase,” and the mood of the workers “was not a good one even still.”⁷³³ Many workers at the Georg shaft, when told by management of the Vienna conference and its decision, condemned the nine percent wage increase as “far too meager” and only reluctantly entered the mine. Lt. Perl, their Cadre Commandant, ordered them to work in his official capacity, and as disobeying such an order was a military crime, the two young workers who still refused to work were then arrested for insubordination.⁷³⁴ The civilian district administration was in full agreement with the

⁷³²ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(8). "Bericht." Novák, April 12th, 1916. The wage increases under discussion (*Teuerungszulagen*) were administratively distinct from base wages and were conceived of as a temporary palliative to ameliorate inflationary pressures rather than as wage increases, which had a more permanent character.

⁷³³Ibid.

⁷³⁴ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(9). "Bericht." Novák, April 11th, 1916.

disappointed workers— the district leadership's conference of the 11th of April, 1916 “found the concessions completely insufficient.”⁷³⁵

Regardless of the rumors and threats of a general strike, though, Monday came and went without anything remarkable occurring. The Silesian state government in Opava/Troppau reported that approximately ten percent of workers were absent for the morning shift, which “perhaps has something to do with the fact that today is Monday. Otherwise everything is peaceful.”⁷³⁶ By the 12th of April matters had largely returned to normal, though occasional minor disturbances would continue for some time.

In total, the movement had encompassed over forty shafts in sixteen locales, with the most important mining concerns being those of the Vítkovice Steelworks, the Austrian Mining and Iron Works Corporation, also a major steel producer, and the Emperor Ferdinand Northern Railway.⁷³⁷ However, every mine shaft of the forty-one operating in Ostravsko experienced the strike wave to some degree. At the height of the unrest, the Military Court in Těšín/Teschen reported that criminal charges had been levied against one thousand, six hundred, and sixty-nine persons, though the bulk were released on their own recognizance. Over the course of the strikes several hundred workers were imprisoned, sent to Těšín/Teschen to undergo courts-martial, or brought before Military Command Kraków's tribunals in Moravian Ostrav/Ostrau to face their courts-martial there.⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(8). "Bericht." Novák, April 12th, 1916.

⁷³⁶ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Novák, April 10th, 1916.

⁷³⁷ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Fragebogen II." April 5th, 1916

⁷³⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "IV. Bericht der k.k. Feldgerichtsexpositur in Teschen. Erstattet durch k.k. Oblt. Aud. Dr. Steiner." April 5th, 1916.

The Politics of Reform

Coercion or Persuasion?

The militarized labor regime in Ostrava-Karviná had begun to incite resistance. The radical transformation in labor relations sparked by the constellation of pre-war labor laws and their extreme interpretation and administration by the Army had maintained production amid worsening conditions for almost two full years, but starvation and deprivation had finally eroded the walls of the Army's coercive labor discipline. This breakdown posed a unique threat to the Habsburg state. Not only was labor unrest in the coal district a threat to industrial output and thus to the Monarchy's security against external adversaries, but the re-definition of the relationship between the state and the miners of the coal district also meant that unrest threatened internal collapse. By defining labor unrest as treason, this strike wave, in a sense, was an organized rebellion against state authority. By challenging the state's ability to manage, direct, and discipline its subjects, Ostrava-Karviná's miners had begun to threaten the legitimacy of the state and its ability to mobilize its citizenry in service of the war effort.

The threat mining unrest posed to both the external and internal security of the Monarchy demanded a response. The immediate governmental response actualized the threat of armed violence contained within the militarized disciplinary framework put in place at the outbreak of the war. Within the logic of this framework, the striking workers were engaged in mutiny, which had to be suppressed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Immediately upon hearing news of the miners' refusal to work at Salm, therefore, Military Station Command in Moravská Ostrava dispatched eighty men of the 31st Militia Regiment from the local garrison to the site, and as the unrest spread more and more men were sent to stamp it out at bayonet point.

Military action went beyond merely breaking up demonstrations. Infantrymen rounded up absentee workers in their homes and placed them under arrest.⁷³⁹ These patrols hunted down striking workers, primarily the single workers who formed the bulk of the strike movement and the majority of its ringleaders, and herded them into their mine shafts at gun point. Joining them there were those married miners deemed dangerous to public order. There they would stay until they abandoned their resistance and took up their tools again.

The open application of violence, however, was not meant to be a permanent solution. The disciplinary framework functioned best through the implicit threat of violence, routinized and undertaken administratively. It was a means to an end, of ensuring a compliant and passive workforce which followed orders and maintained production without challenging the status quo. Open violence was the last resort, an emergency measure undertaken in response to a collective challenge to the authority and legitimacy of the Army's deathgrip on Ostravsko.

The campaign of open and widespread violence presented just as much of a threat to coal production as did the waves of strikes which brought about such extensive military intervention. The figures for the decline in production caused by the strike wave and the following military response are, unfortunately, unavailable, but was considered drastic by contemporaneous observers.⁷⁴⁰ The prospect of a repetition of the strike wave in an even more damaging form was, then, a prospect to be feared. The militarized discipline which had served the Army so well since the war began had finally failed to maintain labor discipline. As such, these strikes marked not an isolated episode, but instead reflected a telling breakdown in the exercise of state authority in the Ostrava-Karviná district. Recourse to violence was the last resort of state power in the district.

As soon as the 31st Militia Regiment managed to reduce the incidence of new strikes to a

⁷³⁹Plaschka, "The Army and Internal Conflict," 344.

⁷⁴⁰ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6. "Bericht." Ach, April 9th, 1916.

minimum, the local authorities as well as the central government began a debate over what measures could be taken to eliminate renewed outbreaks of labor unrest. The demands of the miners themselves were secondary to this debate. In keeping with the logic of the Army's disciplinary framework, the miners' interests were only relevant in so far as they simplified state management of coal production. Therefore, the guiding question was, as the representative from the Ministry of Home Defence, Dr. Kelewer, put it, "which measures provide the most hope for assuring that the operations of the coal mines will no longer be disturbed?"⁷⁴¹

The Moravian governor (*Statthalter*), representative of the central government in Vienna and chief officer of the executive branch in the province, urged the imposition of an even harsher regime of military discipline as the only effective solution, writing to the Minister of the Interior at the height of the strike wave to urge declaration of martial law in the Moravian areas of the coal district. Northern Moravia had been removed from the Zone of Army Operations in October of 1915, due to the crushing Austro-German victories on the Russian Front, a move which represented a symbolic though insubstantial weakening of militarized labor discipline with regards to Ostravsko's mine workers. The outbreak of the strikes, though, persuaded the governor to formally request that the area be reattached to the Zone of Army Operations.⁷⁴² The Silesian half of the district had never left the Zone, and thus that half of Ostravsko remained, as since the Imperial Decree of the 25th of July, 1914, under military law and subject to military justice.

The *Statthalter* advanced two arguments. The first was that it was a necessary measure towards unifying the entire district in the sense that the administrative and legal regimes applicable would be the same in both the Silesian and the Moravian areas. Even though in

⁷⁴¹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(6). "Einsichtsakt." April 12th, 1916.

⁷⁴²SUA, PMV/R, sg. 22 gen, čj. 7253/1916, reprinted in: SUA, *Sborník dokumentů*, 3:107-108. The request was sent on the 4th of April, 1916.

practice the miners in the Moravian half of Ostravsko labored under a system of military discipline just as severe as those in the Silesian area, when not at work and therefore acting as civilians the Moravian workers were not subject to martial law as those in the Silesian half were. The governor hoped that unifying these practices would create a more efficient and effective system of discipline. His second argument was that this resubordination would prevent a widening of the strike wave into the Moravian area of the district. As this had already occurred by the time the governor submitted his request, it seems superfluous. Further, that the strike wave had originated in the Silesian half of the district would seem to contradict his assumptions. Nevertheless, the best solution, as the Moravian governor conceived it, was to extend and harshen the framework of military discipline which had sufficed to maintain order and productivity over the previous two years. How exactly this could be done remained unaddressed.⁷⁴³

Local administration officials agreed with the governor. The District Commissariat (*Bezirkshauptmannschaft*) felt that the only solution to the problems plaguing the industrial district was to strengthen military rule. Arguing for the imposition of military law, the District Commissioner advanced the claim that imposition of martial law in the Moravian area of the industrial district would restore equality of treatment between the workers employed by shafts in Moravia and those in Silesia, since Silesia's continued incorporation into the Zone of Army Operations meant that workers there were under harsher legal constraints than those in Moravia.⁷⁴⁴ This state of affairs left officials worried that the strike movement would become far

⁷⁴³ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "IV. Bericht der k.k. Feldgerichtsexpositur in Teschen. Erstattet durch k.k. Oblt. Aud. Dr. Steiner." April 5th, 1916.

⁷⁴⁴As discussed earlier, The Imperial Decrees of the 25th and 31st of July, 1914, gave the commanding theater general in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia and the Army High Command on the Russian front the right to issue decrees and orders to the civilian population on any matter within the competence of the civilian head of administration in the region. Furthermore, these decrees gave the military the power to enforce such decrees and required all civil administrators in the regions affected to obey them. The coal cadre system in the Moravian area of

more dangerous in the Moravian area than it had in the Silesian one, already under martial law. These fears had been heightened by several instances of sabotage in Silesian shafts. Finally, the imposition of military law could calm the populace if the militarized workers were to be provided with the benefits of military service, namely supplies from military reserves, to counterbalance the detriments of the draconian disciplinary regime.⁷⁴⁵ The reinclusion of the area in the Zone of Army Operations, then, would in their opinion serve to reassert the subjugation of the mining population to the state. An appeal to that end was sent to the Ministry of the Interior.⁷⁴⁶

The civilian ministries of the central government, though, were considerably more willing to contemplate solutions which did not involve the harshening of punitive military discipline. Of course, these solutions were similarly difficult to achieve, but the reasoning behind them was quite different. On the following day, the 6th of April, 1916, a conference was convened by telephone, under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior and under the leadership of one of its representatives, Baron von Handl. Also present were Mine Councillor Reissig and Mine Secretary Novák from the Ministry of the Interior, Section Chief Schober representing the Ministry of Justice, and Dr. Kelewer for the Ministry of Public Works. The agenda had only one item – resolving the Ostrava-Karviná strike wave.

The conclusion of all present was to confirm that “the root of the laborer movement was obviously economic, and that the most pressing issue was clearly the amelioration of the difficulties in the provision and cost of foodstuffs and clothes as far as possible.” The Ministry of

the basin, though, was basically equivalent as far as labor discipline was concerned. See *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). LXVIII. Stück, Nr. 153. 815; *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). XCV. Stück, Nr. 186. 891.

⁷⁴⁵ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "IV. Bericht der k.k. Feldgerichtsexpositur in Teschen. Erstattet durch k.k. Oblt. Aud. Dr. Steiner." April 5th, 1916. It remains unclear whether the incident referred to was in fact intentional sabotage or instead caused by incompetence or inattention.

⁷⁴⁶Ibid.

the Interior reported that the necessary measures to provision the district with potatoes and beans “had already been set in motion.”⁷⁴⁷ By conceding that the miners had legitimate grievances against the state, the Ministry of the Interior demonstrated a much wider appreciation of the dynamics at work in the relationship between the mining population of Ostrava-Karviná and the state. Military Command Kraków neatly summarized the reciprocal nature of this relationship and the dangers which a monomaniacal emphasis on military discipline entailed in a report pointing out that, “military coercion without the necessary provision for welfare and existence thereby entailed is a constant danger and apt to evoke severe unrest and to make calamitous methods of compulsion necessary”.⁷⁴⁸ The central government's civilian ministries, at least, preferred to make the necessary provisions for welfare and existence rather than hope for the success of these calamitous methods of compulsion.

In addition to attempting to emphasize reducing the miners' privation, the conference also debated the local and state administrations' appeals to secure coal production and order by further strengthening military discipline in the coal district. The ministerial conference was strongly opposed to re-attaching the Moravian areas to the Zone of Army Operations, and the appeals were “overwhelmingly rejected”.⁷⁴⁹ The most influential arguments against the possibility were that it would be ridiculous on the one hand and superfluous on the other.

The absurdity of declaring that the northern areas of Moravia constituted a front line against the Russian army was self-evident, as the Russian army had at that point retreated beyond the eastern borders of Congress Poland, approximately three hundred miles away. That such a change was unnecessary, though, is the more interesting argument. The assembled officials

⁷⁴⁷ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(6). "Amtsbericht." April 12th, 1916.

⁷⁴⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(Präs. 1658/L). "Bericht." April 9th, 1916.

⁷⁴⁹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(6). "Amtsbericht." April 12th, 1916.

concluded that “those crimes here considered, typical for mine worker strikes, can be dealt with under the statutes of martial law even if the area in question belongs to the hinterland.”⁷⁵⁰ Those mine workers liable to militia service (*Landsturmpflichtige*) were already, due to their legal status, subordinated to military discipline and military justice. They were, in a sense, soldiers on active duty. As such, insubordination, mutiny, or abandoning their post were already punishable by courts-martial or summary judgements, and miners were in fact being punished under these clauses both before and after the conference met.⁷⁵¹

Those workers outside of the militia laborer category were also liable to military justice. The same Imperial Decree that at the beginning of the war imposed military courts for a wide range of civilian activities decreed uprising (*Aufbruch*), malicious damage or arson against industrial plant or facilities, or aiding and abetting such, as military crimes.⁷⁵² That these crimes, when committed by members of the labor militia, were military crimes in the strict sense of the word, allowed any aid or co-operation on the part of the approximately fifteen percent of the labor force comprised by non-militia laborers to be punished under the aiding and abetting clause of the Code of Military Justice.⁷⁵³ That fifteen percent, though generally consisting of youths under seventeen and therefore unable to be inducted into the labor militia, was also under the slightly looser category of laborers under the War Production Law and therefore liable to military justice in cases of abandoning or subverting their labor obligations, which is to say, striking.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵⁰Ibid.

⁷⁵¹Articles 147-148, 161-164, and 433 of the Austro-Hungarian Code of Military Justice. See *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1912), LV. Stück, Nr. 130. 441-531.

⁷⁵²*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1914). LXXI. Stück, Nr. 156. 821.

⁷⁵³Article 14 of the Austro-Hungarian Code of Military Justice. See *Reichsgesetzblatt* (1912), LV. Stück, Nr. 130. 443.

⁷⁵⁴ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/6(5). "Bericht des k.k. Oblt.-Auditor Dr. Michael Eckstein über seine Amtshandlung in Mähr.-Ostrau." April 5th, 1916.

The effective outcome of these legal categories was that the work force in the Ostrava-Karviná basin was that little remained to be further militarized. There was, it seemed, nowhere left to go. It was this increasing overlap between civilian labor and military service which convinced those present at the conference of the 6th of April that the imposition of military law would be senseless. This view was confirmed by the War Ministry's representative, Auditor-General Killian, and the conclusions of those present were submitted to the Military Commandants of Kraków and of Vienna.⁷⁵⁵

Military Command Vienna agreed with the ministerial conference's conclusions.⁷⁵⁶ Noting that less than a third of the absolute minimum necessary quantity of potatoes had reached Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau in the previous few days, the Military Commandant for Vienna located the cause of the problem in a lack of sufficient provisioning and conceded that “a one-time provisioning will not suffice...especially as the laborers would then believe that it was not a lack of foodstuffs but a lack of the good will to provide them”.⁷⁵⁷ In this view, lack of discipline was not the problem, privation was. It was the state, rather than the miners, which had failed to hold up the implicit bargain underpinning labor discipline in the industrial district. Unfortunately, the Police Directorate reported on the 13th of April that, despite promises of “great quantities of potatoes and beans already rolling towards Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau...absolutely nothing has arrived”.⁷⁵⁸

Ultimately, though, the civilian ministries in Vienna largely lacked the authority to dictate which measures would be taken to resolve the strike wave and prevent its reoccurrence. More

⁷⁵⁵ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(6). "Amtsbericht." April 12th, 1916.

⁷⁵⁶Military Command Vienna constituted one of a number of *Landwehr* regional commands responsible for internal military operations.

⁷⁵⁷ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7). "Ad Erlass Prä. No. 6645-IV." April 12th, 1916.

⁷⁵⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(5). "Bericht." April 13th, 1916.

problematic, though, was that they lacked the power to do so as well. The resources and organization necessary to consistently supply the industrial district was beyond the reach of the Habsburg state by 1916. The initiative, then, laid in the hands of the Army High Command. The AOK consistently spoke out for a military solution, urging the re-attachment of the entirety of the basin into the Zone of Army Operations as the most efficient method of handling the problem.⁷⁵⁹ And before Franz Josef's death, on November 21st, 1916, the Army High Command exercised very broad discretionary authority, and even more informal influence. Accordingly, then, the AOK sent an abrupt notice to the Imperial and Royal War Ministry on the 14th of April, 1916, announcing that as of the previous day "the political region of Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau has been attached to the Zone of Army Operations".⁷⁶⁰ The district leadership in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau heard about it second-hand, from the Lvov/Lemberg Military Command.⁷⁶¹

That the decision went to the proponents of further militarizing labor discipline instead of those who argued for fulfilling the terms of the implicit contract underpinning labor mobilization in the First World War undoubtedly failed to halt the accelerating estrangement of industrial labor in Ostravsko. The resumption of martial law in the Moravian area of the district constituted a step backwards in persuading the population of Ostravsko that the Habsburg government was capable of addressing their concerns. Reliance on the exercise of naked violence would eventually prove utterly unable to maintain stability in the face of hunger and exhaustion.

By 1916 the working population of the industrial district, radicalized by privation and violence, mobilized themselves behind peace instead of the war effort and began to openly

⁷⁵⁹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7). "k.u.k. Armeeoberkommando an das k.u.k. Kriegsministerium." April 13th, 1916.

⁷⁶⁰ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 61, Nr. 46/11. "Einbeziehung des politischen Bez. Mhr. Ostrau i.d.Bereich der Armee im Felde." April 14th, 1916.

⁷⁶¹ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1916, Abt. 5. Carton 1-2, Nr. 1/3(7). "Bericht." April 14th, 1916.

threaten to cut off war production.⁷⁶² The dynamic in play was a microcosm of the progressive estrangement between the Habsburg state and the peoples over which it ruled. Their concerns dismissed, their suffering ignored, more and more sacrifice for the war effort was required as less and less was provided to compensate them for their exertions. The draconian military regime in Ostravsko forced the workers there to choose between treason and starvation. Though an extreme case, the district can also be seen as exemplifying the process which was to expand throughout the Monarchy and finally even into the Habsburg military. The tension between unbearable wartime conditions and untenable military demands fueled by grandiose conceptions of military necessity, in the district as in the Monarchy, drove the population away from respect for and compliance with state actions.

Further, the idea that the application of military coercion could overcome all obstacles assisted in preventing the emergence of a partnership between the Habsburg state and its laboring population. The rejection of this possibility even before the First World War began and the substitution of militarized and authoritarian measures destroyed the possibility of a secondary mobilization behind the war effort at the very moment in which it was most drastically necessary. The mining population's alienation from the state as well as from the war effort also challenged the legitimacy of the state's power to direct and mobilize its citizenry. It destabilized war industries and tied up increasing numbers of troops for internal pacification.⁷⁶³

The Ostrava-Karviná district was one of the most important underpinnings of war production in the Habsburg Monarchy, and its labor force was critical to Habsburg economic mobilization. The framework of military labor discipline set in place there at the beginning of the First World War functioned as long as the state was able to provide a sufficient basis for the

⁷⁶²ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1917, Abt. 10. Carton 38, Nr. 41/7(634). "Kundgebung." May 17th, 1917.

⁷⁶³. Huemos, "'Kartoffeln her," 286.

material existence of the work force, but by 1916 this system was going bankrupt. The threat of violence carried out under a system of administrative coercion was no longer sufficient to maintain coal output, and the only available means of ensuring its continuance was the exercise of violence against the mining population. The government debates over the proper response to the breakdown of the system of militarized labor discipline demonstrated this well. Though proper provisioning would have been optimal, it was also impossible. Patchwork attempts to expand the system of administrative coercion foundered on the difficulty of meaningfully sharpening the threat of violence implicit in the system.

The Thaw Begins

The following weeks did see a serious attempt to respond to the exigencies facing the industrial laborers in Ostravsko. Military Command Kraków released an announcement, posted up at individual factories, mines, and on street corners, which read: "We advise the workforce that the Imperial and Royal Military Command Kraków has arranged for the flawless provision of the requirements for life at authorized locations."⁷⁶⁴ *Duch času* mocked the insufficiency of the wage increase - "and when prices for some foodstuffs have increased up to three hundred percent, a nine percent increase in wages surely means a tiny contribution to nutrition in such worker families" - but acknowledged the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Home Defense to improve food supplies.⁷⁶⁵ Those efforts involved measures to increase provision of flour, potatoes, and beans, which "will redress the calamity which was greatly felt."⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁴AMO/ND9/15/135/Duch času/Apr. 13, 1916/44/2/Horníkům byly zvýšeny mzdy. *Dělnictvu se oznamuje, že c.a.k. vojenské velitelství v Krakově zasadilo se na příslušných místech o bezvadné zásobení životními potřebami.*

⁷⁶⁵AMO/ND9/15/135/Duch času/Apr. 18, 1916/46/2/Lepší zásobování horníků. *A když ceny některých poživatin byly zvýšený až o 300 procent, znamená 9 proc. zvýšení mzdy přece v takové dělnické rodině příspěvěček k výživě.*

⁷⁶⁶AMO/ND9/15/135/Duch času/Apr. 18, 1916/46/2/Lepší zásobování horníků.

These measures, though, did not necessarily accomplish a great deal. The immediate impact was certainly useful in reassuring the population that the Habsburg administration was attempting to solve their problems - "the delivery of wagons [of food] is broadly satisfactory."⁷⁶⁷ Nevertheless, "the situation of the coal-industrial Ostrava-Karviná district in recent times has not underwent any fundamental changes."⁷⁶⁸ The district's industrial and mining products were finding hungry domestic markets, coal prices had increased, and the coking works were hard-pressed to keep up with demand. Nevertheless, questions in the district like "what are the minimal requirements for one's sustenance?" circulated as live concerns.⁷⁶⁹

The answer calculated, at least for light workers, was two thousand, five hundred, and sixty calories, which could be achieved through two hundred grams of flour, one hundred grams of sugar, one hundred grams of meat, two hundred grams of potatoes, half a liter of milk, fifty grams of fat, and two hundred grams of fruit. At rationing prices then current, such would cost two crowns and fifteen heller (though black market prices would certainly be higher).⁷⁷⁰ Individuals with physically undemanding jobs could still afford to eat as long as the supply of food on the white market lasted. Heavy workers, workers with multiple family members to feed, or workers with higher rents, loans to pay, or other sources of expenses would face a much harder struggle. The contrast between the struggling citizen and the libertine wealthy would soon lead to important changes in Habsburg administration.

The first omen of revolution in Cisleithanian administration came on October 21st, 1916. Minister-President Stürgkh, as was his wont, was enjoying an excellent lunch in the dining room

⁷⁶⁷AMO/ND9/15/135/Duch času/May 6, 1916/54/2/Situace uhelného průmyslu ostravsko-karvinského revíru.

⁷⁶⁸AMO/ND9/15/135/Duch času/May 6, 1916/54/2/Situace uhelného průmyslu ostravsko-karvinského revíru.

⁷⁶⁹AMO/ND9/15/135/Duch času/May 2, 1916/52/3/Kolik potřebuje člověk minimálně ku své výživě.

⁷⁷⁰AMO/ND9/15/135/Duch času/May 2, 1916/52/3/Kolik potřebuje člověk minimálně ku své výživě.

of the famous Vienna hotel *Meißl und Schadn*, when he was rudely interrupted by the notable Socialist Friedrich Adler. Adler, in an act of desperate protest against both Austria-Hungary's war policies in general and Stürgkh's autocratic mode of governance by decree in particular, drew a pistol and fired three times, ending Stürgkh's life as well as his government. The new head of government, named by Franz Josef in his last real act as Emperor, was the Finance Minister Ernst von Koerber. Von Koerber's ministry was short and of little note, with his only notable intervention being the centralization of the various Habsburg provisioning agencies into the War Provisioning Office (*Kriegsernährungsamt*), established as an independent ministry.⁷⁷¹ The Emperor Franz Josef, regnant since the abdication of his uncle Ferdinand I in 1848, breathed his last a month later, on November 21st, 1916. The passing of his last breath brought about far-reaching changes in Habsburg governance in the last two years of the First World War.

⁷⁷¹Josef Redlich, *Austrian War Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929). 136.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRISONS TO COMPEL THE LABOR OF FREE MEN: THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR, 1917-1918

Bez uhlí není dnes dopravy a bez dopravy není života. Bez uhlí stohne okamžitě pohyb milionových armád, uhasnou výhně továren, ustane tlukot srdcí milionových měst a kolem vychladlých krbů chudiny budou se choulit miliony hladových a průhledných těl proletářských dětí. Proto je potchopitelné, že dnešní uhelná kalamita zachvěla tak hluboko celým naším společenským a státním organismem, ježto se ukázalo, jak od jejího rychlého a trvalého řešení závisí tak nesmírně mnoho.

Without coal there is today no transportation and without transportation there is no life. Without coal ceases immediately the movement of armies of millions, the forges of the factories gutter out, the beating hearts of a million cities come to a halt and around the cold hearths of the poor will huddle millions of starving and diaphanous bodies of proletarian children. It is therefore comprehensible, that the contemporary coal calamity so deeply shakes the entirety of our social and state organism, as it demonstrates how enormously much depends on its quick and lasting resolution.

-Dr. František Soukup⁷⁷²

⁷⁷²A lawyer and Social-Democratic politician, remembered mainly as one of the five "men of October 28th" who proclaimed the Czecho-Slovak Republic in Prague. AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Feb. 22, 1917/23/1-2/Světová válka a uhlí. 2.

The new Emperor, Franz Josef's great-nephew the Archduke Karl, succeeded him on the throne as Karl I. Karl came to the throne with a new program, aimed at rejuvenating the realm, getting out of the war, and getting out from under Berlin's heel. Emperor Karl's ascension to the throne was under circumstances little less challenging than his predecessor's in 1848. Rather than a civil war, Karl I faced Russian and Italian armies, internal enervation and discontent, a series of existential economic crises, and an overbearing and increasingly hostile ally in Imperial Germany. Also unlike his distinguished predecessor, however, Karl had no room to make youthful mistakes.

On the 13th of December, 1916, he replaced Koerber with his own choice for Prime Minister, Heinrich Clam-Martinic, while Count Ottokar Czernin took over as foreign minister from Count Burián. Czernin, who along with Karl was the main source of Habsburg policy, aimed at a reconstruction of the operation of Habsburg war governance.⁷⁷³ Though Clam-Martinic's cabinet remained substantially German-Centralist in character, the new government aimed at improving relationships with the Slavic population of the Monarchy and ending the predominance of the AOK in domestic affairs. Karl's ascension therefore marked the end of Conrad von Hötzendorf's domination of Cisleithanian affairs.⁷⁷⁴ Conrad was quickly dismissed as Chief of the General Staff, on February 27th, 1917, and shuffled off to command the Italian front. Many of his main supporters and sympathizers were removed from their positions - Joseph Metzger was replaced as chief of operations by Alfred von Waldstätten, and Minister of War Alexander von Krobatin was appointed 10th Army Commander and thus replaced by Rudolf Stöger-Steiner. Archduke Friedrich, titular commander of the Habsburg military since the beginning of the war, was retired, and Karl declared that he would take personal command of the

⁷⁷³Josef Redlich, *Austrian War Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929). 136-137.

⁷⁷⁴Josef Redlich, *Austrian War Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929). 139-140.

army. The AOK was moved from Těšín/Teschen to Baden, in the suburbs of Vienna.⁷⁷⁵

This marked a sea change the Habsburg experience of First World War, one that historian Ivan Šedivý has termed "'Perestroika' for Austria".⁷⁷⁶ One of Karl I's first acts upon becoming Emperor was to commute Kramář and Rašín's death sentences for treason to life in prison as part of his outreach to the Slavic population, and his coronation took place on December 30th, 1916, with the full participation of the Czech parties in Austria-Hungary.⁷⁷⁷ He forbade strategic bombings when they would endanger civilians, halted the use of poison gas, ended corporal punishments, ordered an end to summary executions for both civilians and members of the military even in the Zone of Army Operations, and ended duelling in the Army.⁷⁷⁸

Karl's new course, though, had surprisingly little impact on the experience of the war for industrial labor in Ostravsko. The operations of military administration continued and intensified as deprivation worsened. The mobilization of industrial labor re-intensified as production plummeted and state capacity to ameliorate shortages in food and other necessities collapsed. The resumption of high politics in the *Reichsrat* and the *Ballhausplatz* was accompanied by an acceleration of low politics in Ostravsko in the form of strikes, hunger demonstrations, and passive resistance, the confluence of which shattered the cohesion of the Habsburg state.

⁷⁷⁵Holger Herwig, *The First World War*. 241-242.

⁷⁷⁶Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země a velká válka, 1914-1918* (Nakladatelství lidové noviny, 2001) 291.

⁷⁷⁷Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*. 30.

⁷⁷⁸Holger Herwig, *The First World War*. 242.

The February Events

The bleak cold arrival of February 1917 swept in accompanied by a wave of unrest. Matters had improved only temporarily following the previous year's strike wave, and deprivation had once again come to a head. Strikes and hunger demonstrations broke out across the district, and inflammatory and anti-war sentiments occasionally took on a tinge of anti-state sentiment. One flyer, distributed across the district and apparently written by a "simple miner," read "[m]iners, to arms, the time of revenge and liberation from the yoke of capitalism has arrived."⁷⁷⁹ Another unknown author wrote and distributed fliers denouncing insufficient provisioning along with the poor quality of the food available, concluding not with an appeal to the authorities but with a call to action - "[n]ow, brothers, we plead - struggle. Without struggle nothing will happen. He who struggles, triumphs."⁷⁸⁰

The workers of the Zwierzinz mine in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau roiled into strike action on the 21st of February. The afternoon shift at Zwierzinz entered the mine as normal, without any particular problems. However, shortly after the shift entered the mine, the shift supervisor entered the mine's administrative office to report a brewing disaster. The manual laborers (the carriers and car haulers, *Schlepper and Hundstößer*) in corridor five had remained together after entry and refused to distribute themselves to their assigned stations. The thirty or so workers submitted to their supervisor "that they were hungry, and therefore unfit for work. They have at home no bread, no potatoes, no beans, absolutely no food."⁷⁸¹ The mine leadership assigned their mine foreman, Holek, the unenviable task of making these workers resume their labors, a task at

⁷⁷⁹Státní ústřední archiv v Praze, MVP/R 1908-1918/277D/č.24797 XV b/17. Cited in: Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí*, 44. *Horníci, do boje, čas pomsty a osvobození od jha kapitalismu přišel.*

⁷⁸⁰Státní ústřední archiv v Praze, MVP/R 1908-1918/277D/č.24797 XV b/17. Cited in: Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí*, 44. *Tedy bratři, žádáme - bojovat. Bez boje nic nejde. Kdo bojuje, zvítězí.*

⁷⁸¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 336/Zwierzingagrube Streikbewegung.

which he was successful thanks to aggressive promises. He promised that the mine leadership would receive a delegation from the workers to hear their demands, that insofar as the question was one of provisioning everything possible would be done, and that provisions from the mine stores would be given out immediately as a palliative [*Linderung*]."⁷⁸²

On the next day, the 22nd, the early shift at Zwierzinz was almost entirely unwilling. Twenty-two of the thirty manual workers entered the mine only through armed coercion on the part of the military authorities, and once in the mine had to be persuaded to begin work. Three men failed to show up at all.⁷⁸³ These events repeated themselves upon the arrival of the afternoon shift later that day, with those workers forced by the military to enter the mine declaring that "they will work only as much as they have food."⁷⁸⁴ Their entry into the mine was accompanied by Coal Cadre Command Nr. 6 soldiers to ensure their compliance.⁷⁸⁵

The miners at the Austria shaft in Karviná/Karwin and the Sofia and Alpine shafts in Poruba/Poremba also struck on the 22nd, due to food shortages. Negotiations over the provisions of food to the miners between the mine leadership and the miners began immediately.⁷⁸⁶ At the Sofia mine the next day only seventeen of one hundred and fifty men on the early shift arrived at work, and for the afternoon shift one hundred and five of one hundred and sixty began work; the remainder refused to return.⁷⁸⁷ The Alpine shaft leadership managed to persuade less than half of

⁷⁸²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 336/Zwierzingagrube Streikbewegung.

⁷⁸³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 654/Bergarbeiterunruhen in Poln. Ostrau.

⁷⁸⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 336/Zwierzingagrube Streikbewegung.

⁷⁸⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 654/Bergarbeiterunruhen in Poln. Ostrau.

⁷⁸⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 180/Arbeitseinstellung am Sophienschachte und Alpinenschachte in Poremba.

⁷⁸⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 331ad/Bergarbeiterstreik am Josefschacht in Orlau und Sofienschachte in Poremba.

the afternoon shift to resume work, with ninety-four of two hundred and twenty-four men entering the mine for their shift at 4:00 in the afternoon.⁷⁸⁸

That evening Coal Cadre Command Nr. 2's (Karviná/Karwin) request for military support brought elements of Militia Infantry Regiment Nr. 31 to move into Karviná/Karwin overnight. These forces were earmarked "to bring the striking mine workers forcefully [*gewaltsam*] to work in that they will be collected by means of military patrols and escorted to [their] shaft."⁷⁸⁹

On the 23rd, incidents also occurred among the miners at the Josef shaft in Orlová/Orlau. Twenty-five men from a total of three hundred and seven assigned to the early shift failed to appear, while thirty-seven of the two hundred and forty-six men assigned to the afternoon shift did not appear for work.⁷⁹⁰ The striking workers declared that they would return to work when there was "a notable improvement in the state of things for mine workers."⁷⁹¹

The strike at the Austria shaft in Karviná/Karwin continued. The morning shift of two hundred and fifty men was reduced to twenty-one, while the afternoon shift of two hundred and forty-nine was reduced to only ten men. The police agent on the scene reported that the mood among the miners was "very embittered and they do not want to resume work until their demands have been met."⁷⁹²

At the Johann mine in Karviná/Karwin, the entire contingent of workers assigned to the

⁷⁸⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Zl. 180ad/Arbeiterausstand am Sophien- imd Alpinenschachte in Poremba betreffend.

⁷⁸⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Zl. 76ad/Bergarbeiterausstand am Austriaschacht in Karwin.

⁷⁹⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 331ad/Bergarbeiterstreik am Josefschacht in Orlau und Sofienschachte in Poremba.

⁷⁹¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 331ad/Bergarbeiterstreik am Josefschacht in Orlau und Sofienschachte in Poremba.

⁷⁹²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Zl. 76ad/Bergarbeiterausstand am Austriaschacht in Karwin.

afternoon shift, three hundred and fifty-four men in total, struck due to "insufficient wages, general inflation in food prices, and shortages of foodstuffs..."⁷⁹³ The mine workers had congregated in front of their mine shaft and expressed their complaints to Mine Director Zimmerman and the concern leader (*Betriebsleiter*) Tenschert, who happened to be present. Despite the vigorous representations of these management figures, the workers nevertheless left the area en masse. The "sworn militia worker Karl Czendlik from Altstadt was identified as the inciter and chief agitator by the Coal Cadre Command Nr. 3 and taken into temporary custody."⁷⁹⁴ Episodes of unrest had also occurred at the Dreifaltigkeit, the Emma, and the Michaelis shafts in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau.⁷⁹⁵

That morning, a group of some two hundred miners' wives arrived at the food stores for the Sofia mine, there to be refused food. This prompted the group to begin demonstrating in front of the mine until the arrival of a Gendarme patrol led by Heinrich Weinhold. The patrol proceeded to break up the demonstration and disperse the demonstrators. Following the dispersal, Captain Schneider arrived with one hundred and sixty infantrymen to ensure order in the area.⁷⁹⁶ The next day, however, The Sofia and Alpine mines went back to work as normal for both the morning and the afternoon shifts.⁷⁹⁷

That same afternoon Military Command Kraków telephoned Station Command in

⁷⁹³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Zl. 153ad/Bergarbeiterstreik am Johansschacht in Karwin.

⁷⁹⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Zl. 153ad/Bergarbeiterstreik am Johansschacht in Karwin.

⁷⁹⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 654/Bergarbeiterunruhen in Poln. Ostrau.

⁷⁹⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Zl. 180ad/Arbeiterausstand am Sophien- imd Alpinenschachte in Poremba betreffend.

⁷⁹⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 180ad/Ausstand der Bergarbeiter am Sophien- und Alpinenschachte in Poremba.

Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau to accede to the local request for military support in the restoration of order in the district. An additional one and a half companies of the Militia Infantry Regiment Nr. 31 were therefore detached as *Assistenz*.⁷⁹⁸ These men were to be used as reinforcements for the Coal Cadre commands and were not subordinate to either police or civilian authorities. By the terms of their orders, they were "to operate independently, and to regard workers who refuse work or entry [into their mine shafts] as mutineers."⁷⁹⁹

Wild rumors began circulating in Ostravsko as the strike wave gained steam. On the 23rd of February a factory worker named Rudolf Polo brought a slip of paper to the gendarmes at the Sowinetz post in Karviná/Karwin. His motives are unclear, but when interviewed by Cadre Commandant Josef John he volunteered that he had received said piece of paper from an unknown miner in Leuten/Lutynia. Thereafter he was given leave to go, having demonstrated to John's satisfaction that he was not responsible for any distribution of the note.⁸⁰⁰

The note itself, a translation of which was appended to the report on Polo, intimated the necessity for violent revolution and reflected the high levels of dissatisfaction and discontent prevalent among the working population in Ostravsko.⁸⁰¹ Written by "a miner," the note was an appeal to the author's "[b]rother miners," and touched on several important drivers of worker dissatisfaction.⁸⁰² He bemoaned the militarization of himself and his fellow miners "since the war broke out," and drew a parallel between the men serving in the armed forces and the militarized

⁷⁹⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Pr. 1047/L/Telephonische Depesche.

⁷⁹⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 225/Das beiliegende Befehlsschreiben... *als Meuterer zu behandeln*.

⁸⁰⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht.

⁸⁰¹The note was originally written in Polish. The appended translation was into German. ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht. Uebersetzung.

⁸⁰²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht. Uebersetzung.

workers at home, saying "[o]ur colleagues die of hunger and cold in the field, [as do] we here in the hinterland."⁸⁰³ This parallel did not remain only a passive one, however, and as "[o]ur brothers and colleagues defend themselves against [their] enemies, we must defend ourselves against those who eat our bread [*unsere Brotfresser*]."⁸⁰⁴ This parallel view is a clear demonstration of the increasingly dangerous revolutionary currents gaining traction in the area, drawing an explicit parallel between the ongoing military action against Russian and Italian forces and a hoped-for domestic struggle against the Habsburg bourgeoisie.

The methods called for were not so extreme as this would suggest, involving neither rifles nor guillotines. The author called only that "we should together enter into a general strike...they give us less food and more work."⁸⁰⁵ The author's demands remained strictly economic as well, writing "[w]e demand an improvement in the amount to which [the costs of] food, laundry, and so on have risen...at a minimum ten K as well as petroleum and everything else that a miner needs."⁸⁰⁶ Until these demands were met, not by words but in a written contract, "in black and white...entry [into the mines] will not occur...please pass this along."⁸⁰⁷ Though as of yet no one in Ostravsko was cognizant of it, that same day, the 23rd of February, the first Russian Revolution began.

The Commandant's Office for Worker Division Nr. 5, headed by Senior Lieutenant Dr. Fritz Loew and responsible for Přívoz/Oderfurt, recorded another anonymous worker letter

⁸⁰³ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht. Uebersetzung.

⁸⁰⁴ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht. Uebersetzung.

⁸⁰⁵ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht. Uebersetzung.

⁸⁰⁶ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht. Uebersetzung.

⁸⁰⁷The passive construction of the phrase is hard to represent in English - "So lange wir dies nicht Schwarz und Weiss haben werden, wird nicht eingefahren." ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Bericht. Uebersetzung.

written in Polish. Also addressed to the mining population, this letter aimed to incite strikes to bring about improvements in living conditions as well, though without the revolutionary undertones. The author grounded his call to his fellow miners in his observation that "we have long wished to live as human beings, and not as cattle. After all, we now have the best way towards [achieving] everything, [one] must not quail and declare 'permit us to eat, and we will work.'"⁸⁰⁸ He went further, calling on miners to declare "[g]ive us otherwise wages, so that we are with and thereby able to clothe ourselves."⁸⁰⁹ He finally went on to emphasize the central importance of unity in achieving success, arguing "[o]nly by speaking with one voice can we act such that we do not harm ourselves. In the Ostravsko factories and concerns everyone is already striking. So each [of you] think on it and simply come together and go to the masters and speak of what we suffer."⁸¹⁰

Another anonymous letter housed in the Police Commissariat archives was signed by "wives, who suffer hunger," and was addressed to the area's "honored mine workers."⁸¹¹ The message both blamed and appealed to the (male) miners for the suffering experienced by the families of Ostravsko. They asked, "why have you not rebelled for a better income, for more bread, bacon, sugar, shoe leather, you yourself see that you all suffer privation at home..."⁸¹² The destitution and hunger afflicting workers' families in Ostravsko was, in their telling, a result of

⁸⁰⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Szanowni Górnicy! Quote lightly edited for legibility. *Przeciesz my chcemy jeszcze dłużej żyć jako ludzie, a nie jako bydło. Teras (sic) mamy przecież najlepszy sposób ku wszystkiemu tylko nie trzeba się bać a powiedzieć dajcie nam jeść, będziemy pracować.*

⁸⁰⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Szanowni Górnicy! *Dajcie nam zarobek inaczej abyśmy mogli czem a zaco swoji ciało przyodziać.*

⁸¹⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Szanowni Górnicy! *Tylko jednym głosem powiedzieć nie będziemy robić bo się nam krzywda dzieje. Na ostravskich zawodech już wszyscy strejkują. Tak sobie każdy pomyślijcie a jednodusznie się zebrać a iść ku panóm a powiedzieć co nas boli.*

⁸¹¹The word used, *Weiber*, could at the time mean either wives or women. ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kundmachung – Geehrte Bergarbeiter!

⁸¹²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kundmachung – Geehrte Bergarbeiter!

exploitation by political and economic elites; "...the lords [Herrn] martyr you...they do with you whatever they want...they have so much food, that they let it get moldy on the floor and the others must die of hunger."⁸¹³

The main target of this letter, however, was not the Habsburg elite, but the miners. They continued, "[y]ou are yourselves guilty in the matter, because you demand nothing..."⁸¹⁴ The authors contrasted the passivity and acceptance that here characterized the male mining population with the energy and assertion demonstrated by the women of the district. "We dumb women have to step in for you, since we have already twice been up the hill by the Senior Lieutenant [Commandant Loew]...and so we ask of you miners to also stand behind us."⁸¹⁵ Their depiction of their conversations with Loew was one of calm reason and success - he told them, they said, that he would address the reduction in their sugar quotas, and that he would make every effort to correct shortages in bread and potatoes.

The accusations and gendered shaming aimed at inciting revolution. "Fear no soldiers..." it continued, "...as we feared none before the Mining Office on Saturday. As we said that we would not give way, they vanished, because they had seen that they would not bring us to heel."⁸¹⁶ The relentless privation would not, in the authors' view, redound to the advantage of the elites. On the contrary, "[w]e wish to eat, hunger chokes us, and the year 1848 approaches, since the lords forget what happened with them in the year 1848!"⁸¹⁷ The repeated invocation of the revolution of 1848 as the touchstone oriented matters less towards a rhetoric of class conflict

⁸¹³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kundmachung – Geehrte Bergarbeiter!

⁸¹⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kundmachung – Geehrte Bergarbeiter!

⁸¹⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kundmachung – Geehrte Bergarbeiter!

⁸¹⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kundmachung – Geehrte Bergarbeiter!

⁸¹⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kundmachung – Geehrte Bergarbeiter!

(threatening enough) than towards a revolutionary attack on the political structure of the Monarchy itself.

The military authorities seemed briefly at a loss for an appropriate and effective reaction. On the 24th of February, Military Command Lvov/Lemberg issued a special announcement to the population of Ostravsko. Posted across the district, this announcement sought to remind the population that martial law did in fact remain in effect in the area. It further reminded workers that under martial law those who refused to work or obey their superiors, or incited or instigated others to damage rail or mining equipment, installations, or operations were liable to the death penalty.⁸¹⁸ The order to release this announcement aimed only to "again announce the stipulations of martial law" but also commanded that every Cadre Commandant immediately report every military crime telegraphically to Military Command Lvov/Lemberg.⁸¹⁹

Even then the publicly posted announcement was dwarfed in bloodthirstiness by an order penned the same day. Issued by the head of Military Command Lvov/Lemberg, Lieutenant-General August Hajeck, the order was written in his own hand and directed to his immediate subordinates at Military Station Command Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau. It reflected the frustrations of the upper echelons of the Habsburg military with the stubborn and inexplicable refusal of the civilian population to quietly follow orders. Those who sought to defy the Army would answer for it.

The order, a response to the tumultuous unrest in Ostravsko, aimed at achieving two main goals. The first was the detection of the putative authors (*Urheber*) as well as the participants of the demonstrations wracking the district. The second was "the ascertainment of punishable facts according to the prepared criminal charges for field martial or summary judicial [*standrechtlich*]

⁸¹⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Vyhláška.

⁸¹⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Zl. 225/K.u.K. Stationskommando M. Ostrau.

prosecutions under §137 of the *Militärstrafprozessordnung*," which is to say the establishment of sufficient evidence to convince the investigating military judge that the defendant was more likely than not guilty of the crime at hand.⁸²⁰

The order further implied an increase in the number of prosecutions to be expected in the immediate future. Hajeck appointed three new prosecutors, the Auditor Senior Lieutenants (*Oberleutnantauditoren*) Dr. Radlewski, Dr. Rosenberg, and Dr. Breier. He further ordered that all participants in the ongoing demonstrations identified as authors, instigators, or ringleaders, whoever they may be, are immediately to be arrested and imprisoned to await trial. The remaining workers merely participating were to be presented with orders to return to work immediately.

Workers who "in the course of the present day until early tomorrow despite [these orders] do not report to work are by statements and quotations...to be made known to the field courts [Feldgerichte] by the Coal Cadre Commandants tomorrow, the 25th of February."⁸²¹ This was to be done regardless of the legal status of the worker in question - militia workers, workers under the War Production Law, POW laborers, and hired civilian workers were all to be named to the court. The court was then "to immediately act against these named persons by [Hajeck's] further decision, applying summary justice to the sworn militia laborers and POW workers on the basis of the crime of mutiny among others, regarding the remainder according to the legal provisions under martial law applicable for the punishable actions contained in the indictment."⁸²²

Finally, these orders were also meant to have a salutary effect on the willingness of the working population to engage in demonstrations, and therefore needed to be known not only to

⁸²⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Befehl.

⁸²¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Befehl.

⁸²²ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Befehl.

those charged with implementing its provisions but also to the general populace. Hajeck therefore ordered these provisions to be made known, resulting in the already mentioned declaration. He further commanded that the provisions of the order be immediately read and explained to all of the Coal Cadres with striking members in their native language. These explanations, though, were to ensure that the workers "are made aware that all those charged before the field courts have categorically to expect no clemency and the most severe punishment, under martial law the **death** penalty."⁸²³

Station Command Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau immediately undertook to carry out Hajeck's order with "the strictest attention and the appropriately immediate announcement."⁸²⁴ Also, though, Station Commandant Popp took the opportunity to exhort his command regarding his view of the possible roots of the problem in the district. It was possible, he wrote, "that the strike movement was brought into the district through foreign influence, through agitators and rabble-rousers."⁸²⁵ To support this contention, he offered three data points. First was the "circumstance that the worker movement broke out right at the concerns which had been sufficiently provisioned with foodstuffs."⁸²⁶ The second was that numerous placards and other written materials had appeared in the district calling on the workers to strike, though he offered no clear justification for his belief that these materials originated outside of the district or outside of the Monarchy. Third and last was "the accusation of a worker that foreign people are putting pressure on the workers and calling on them to strike."⁸²⁷ As a consequence of this evidence, he

⁸²³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Befehl. The order is handwritten, but the 'Tod' in Todesstrafe as written appears with noteworthy heavy hand.

⁸²⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 225/Das beiliegende Befehlsschreiben...

⁸²⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 225/Das beiliegende Befehlsschreiben...

⁸²⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 225/Das beiliegende Befehlsschreiben...

⁸²⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 225/Das beiliegende Befehlsschreiben...

ordered that "these agitators are to be urgently sought out, if found out they will immediately be handled under martial law."⁸²⁸ Such was not limited merely to the putative foreign agitators, but also extended to their assistants and protectors among the district's population, and even beyond - "[w]ho conceals such attempts at incitement and does not immediately bring charges will be similarly handled under martial law."⁸²⁹

However, the increasingly violent measures ordered locally were not the only response. On Friday the 23rd, Captain Pallo of the General Staff announced his imminent arrival in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau. His arrival, as a personal representative of the General Staff, was meant to allow the Army High Command to take appropriate measures to combat the strike movement in Ostravsko. To that end, he met with the Military Station Commander for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, Senior Lieutenant Wilhelm Popp, representatives of the District Commissariats for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau and Fryštát/Freistadt, the heads of the Gendarme commands, Senior Lieutenant Loew and the Coal Cadre Commandants, with the Police Commissariate requested to invite representatives of the civil authorities.⁸³⁰

As a consequence of Pallo's mission to the district, the Army High Command intervened with the War Ministry to provide additional foodstuffs on an emergency basis before the seething district detonated. The War Ministry thus sent fifty wagonloads of potatoes and five wagonloads of wheat for distribution to the mineworkers. Fortress Command Kraków further contributed five wagons of potatoes and one wagonload of turnips. The note from the War Ministry cautioned that, though the food was underway, it would take at a minimum two to three days to arrive and the workers ought be made aware of that. Commandant Dr. Loew immediately sent to the note to

⁸²⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 225/Das beiliegende Befehlsschreiben...

⁸²⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 24, 1917/Zl. 225/Das beiliegende Befehlsschreiben...

⁸³⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 23, 1917/Telephonische Depesche.

all of his fellow Coal Cadre Commandants in the district to be announced verbatim to the miners under their command.⁸³¹

These measures seem to have had a calming effect. On the morning of the 24th military patrols dragged some twenty workers from their homes and brought them to their workplace, the Austria shaft in Karviná/Karwin, at bayonet point. The afternoon of the 24th, though, saw a resolution of the strike through negotiation. The mine leadership together with the Coal Cadre Command Nr. 2 promised to present the workers' demands to the Ministry of Labor and the workers agreed to return to work until such time as a response was delivered. The concern leadership also as a consequence conceded that the workers who returned to work would be given food from the mine's reserves.⁸³²

On the 26th, the Gendarmerie Command station in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau further reported that the miners working at the Johanna mine in Karviná/Karwin, who had struck on the morning of the 24th, had peacefully resumed work on the morning of the 26th and that both the morning and afternoon shifts had proceeded as normal.⁸³³ The coke workers attached to the mine also returned to work on the 26th - the night shift the previous day had only two thirds of the shift return to work (63%) but the following morning shift was fully manned.⁸³⁴

One representative perspective believed that "the origins of the strike as well as the ubiquitous [herrschend] unrest is to be found in the insufficient...provisioning for the miners, their families as well as the unmarried cart haulers with clothing and foodstuffs on the part of the

⁸³¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/(undated)/Kriegsministerium Abt. 12.

⁸³²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 25, 1917/Zl. 76ad/Bergarbeiterausstand am Austriaschachte in Karwin, vorläufig beendet.

⁸³³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 26, 1917/Zl. 153/Bergarbeiterstreik in Karwin am Johannaschacht.

⁸³⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 26, 1917/Zl. 153/Bergarbeiterstreik in Karwin am Johannaschacht.

concerns.⁸³⁵ The end of the strikes, though, seemed to the Gendarme Command most directly affected to be primarily caused by a combination of two factors. First, the repetition of the strictures of martial law and the emphasis the commanders of the Coal Cadres placed on the penalties involved when speaking to their subordinate workers. Second, "the strikers' own opinion that there was nothing to be achieved by these methods..."⁸³⁶ However, the workers, having made their demands known by means of their various strike actions, "count on a rapid improvement of their present state."⁸³⁷ The workers in Ostravsko were well aware of pressing coal shortages across the Monarchy, and whatever military measures affected individual workers coal miners as a class possessed vital and irreplaceable skills crucial to the further prosecution of the war; skilled miners were simply not expendable. Their demands would have to be addressed at some point and in some manner.⁸³⁸

Similarly, by the 27th of February, Gendarme Command Department Nr. 10, in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, reported that the unrest at the Zwierzins, Dreifaltigkeit, and Emma mines had calmed and that work had resumed as normal.⁸³⁹ At the Michaelis mine, however, problems remained. During the early shift on the 27th fifty-two cart haulers refused to enter the mine until soldiers of the Coal Cadre Watch present forced them in. While there, though, they began work as requested.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 22, 1917/Zl. 654/Bergarbeiterunruhen in Poln. Ostrau.

⁸³⁶ZAO/ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 26, 1917/Zl. 153/Bergarbeiterstreik in Karwin am Johannaschacht.

⁸³⁷ZAO/ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 26, 1917/Zl. 153/Bergarbeiterstreik in Karwin am Johannaschacht.

⁸³⁸AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Feb. 24, 1917/24/2/Příčiny uhelné krise; AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Feb. 27, 1917/25/K nouzi o uhlí.

⁸³⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 27, 1917/Zl. 654ad/Bergarbeiterunruhen in Poln. Ostrau.

⁸⁴⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Feb. 27, 1917/Zl. 654ad/Bergarbeiterunruhen in Poln. Ostrau.

As anticipated, on the 28th of February, the workers of the coking works in Lazy (in Orlová/Orlau) presented a list of demands to their factory leadership. They demanded first increased wages, with workers earning over 6 crowns a shift to receive a raise of 25%, those earning 5-6 crowns to receive an increase of 30%, between 4-5 crowns of 35%, between 3-4 crowns of 40%, and between 2-3 crowns of 45%, to be granted within fourteen days. They additionally demanded cheaper food and improved provisioning.⁸⁴¹ However, the events of February in Ostravsko had essentially come to an end.

⁸⁴¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Mar. 5, 1917/Meldung.

Before the Court: Individual Prosecutions

A wide variety of transgressions were legally proscribed, beyond demonstrations and strikes, and those seized during demonstrations and strikes also faced their day in court. Many delicts were quickly disposed of with minor administrative punishments - female demonstrators in particular rarely faced any serious punishment. Other transgressions were treated much more seriously - inciting strikes, harboring deserters, and even spreading malicious or disturbing (*beunruhigend*) rumors could bring courts-martial, years of imprisonment, or a noose.

The New Year was hardly a festive occasion. On the 4th of January, approximately one hundred women from Přívoz/Oderfurt gathered in front of District Commissioner Gschmeidler's office in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau to protest against the poor quality of flour and bread available. Gschmeidler heard them out, but a Gendarme detachment and the city watch then broke up the demonstration, dispersed the crowd, and arrested five of the women for demonstrating and disobeying orders (*Nichtfolgeleistung*). These five women received sentences of twenty-four to forty-eight hours arrest each.⁸⁴² A maid in Hrabůvka/Hrabuwka, Anna Brus, was sent before the Lvov/Lemberg field court on the 22nd of January for harboring the deserter Johann Fabian.⁸⁴³

Three women were indicted during this miners' strike movement in late February. These three women, all of whom lived in Orlová/Orlau, were workers named Ottilie Heczko, Karoline Kazik, and Anna Firla, all charged with inciting the miners to strike. As a consequence, they were brought before Military Command Lvov/Lemberg's field court and charged under articles 314 and 316 of the Code of Military Justice.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 496/Jan. 4, 1917/Pr. 186/Vorfallenheitenbericht.

⁸⁴³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Jan. 1917/Monatsbericht.

⁸⁴⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Mar. 1, 1917/Pr. 504/Monatsbericht - February. I have no evidence to connect these three women to the previously discussed anonymous miners' wives letter. The congruence remains merely suggestive.

The case against the sworn (*beeideten*) mineworker Karl Czendlik, accused of violating §§159b and 327 of the Code of Military Law (*Militärstrafgesetzbuch*) in the course of agitating among his fellow sworn workers at the Johannis mine, moved forward but slowly. The Military Court of the Military Command Lvov/Lemberg (Львів in Ukrainian), responsible for the prosecution, reiterated their March 5th request for evidence of Czendlik's agitation from the Police Directorate on the 30th of March.⁸⁴⁵ Also in March, one Rudolf Beck, sworn steelworker at Vítkovice/Witkowitz, was found guilty of making derogatory comments against the government and brought before the Steelworks military leader for prosecution.⁸⁴⁶

A miner's widow, Anna Szwiertnia (or Štwiertna) faced prosecution before the Lvov/Lemberg Field Court on the 12th of April. She was charged by the Coal Cadre Command Nr. 2 for Karviná/Karwin for her actions on the 23rd of February at the site of the Austria mine, where a group of workers' wives had gathered and sought to incite the workers to strike. The specific charge levied against Szwiertnia/ Štwiertna was inciting sworn milita worker Andreas Pudlik to strike, yelling "you are still going to your shift? In Orlová/Orlau work has ended, help those who do not work!"⁸⁴⁷ She was also accused of saying that there remained neither money nor ration cards to be acquired through work. In her defense, "she said merely, that it was true."⁸⁴⁸

A miner's wife, Julie Kolesa, came before the District Court in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau on the 28th of February accused of endangering public order under §308 of the Civil Code. She

⁸⁴⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Mar. 30, 1917/Feldgericht des k.u.k. Militärkommandos Lemberg in M. Ostrau.

⁸⁴⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 504/7/Monatsbericht - March.

⁸⁴⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 894/Apr. 4, 1917/Pr. 894/Szwiertnia Anna. *V Lazech nerobia, pomozte též těm, co nerobia!*

⁸⁴⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 894/Apr. 11, 1917/Protokoll, Anna Štwiertna.

was specifically accused of having spread rumors "which were in the highest grade suited for endangering public security, " having told another woman, Anna Provazník, in the presence of her husband, a sworn militia infantryman, and their twelve-year-old son, that during the February mining strikes civilians in Dombrová/Dombrau had opened fire on military units, killing fifteen soldiers and wounding a lieutenant.⁸⁴⁹ The court found her defense, that "she coincidentally heard unknown soldiers relate the events in Dombrau on the streets in various places at various times" to be "not especially believable."⁸⁵⁰

Josef Faber, a nineteen-year-old militia mine worker living in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau and employed at the Emperor Ferdinand Northern Rail's Georg mine there, faced charges of disobedience, desertion, and sabotage. Having repeatedly failed to arrive at work, most recently on the 28th of April and the 2nd of May, Faber was given a military order to resume work on the 2nd, failed to do so, and was compelled to do so on the 3rd by a military patrol. When brought to the mine shaft, though, he refused to begin work and was therefore placed under arrest. Pleading willingness to do so on the next day, he was released for the afternoon shift - but again refused to actually begin work when in the mine. Instead, he threw an empty stone cart from the 4th floor (*Horizont*) of the mine down the main shaft, damaging the ratchet and steering plate mechanisms on the 5th and 6th floors, deformed the shaft's safety grating in three places, and finally severely damaged the cart itself. The immediate cause was apparently rage that his supervisor, Johann Uhlař, refused to allow him permission to leave work as being sick. When asked immediately afterwards by a fellow worker, Stanislaus Bogda, if he had thrown the cart down intentionally, Faber admitted that he had as he "no longer wished to work, but instead wished to enlist in the

⁸⁴⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 673/Feb. 28, 1917/Pr. 673/Kolesa Julie.

⁸⁵⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 673/Feb. 28, 1917/Pr. 673/Kolesa Julie.

military."⁸⁵¹ He faced the death penalty.

⁸⁵¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 271/May 7, 1917/Zl. 943/Strafanzeige gegen den Lst. Bergarbeiter Faber Josef des Georgschachtes M. Ostrau.

The New World: Imperial Reform and the Russian Revolution

The outbreak of revolution in Russia provoked great consternation across the warring countries of Europe. The Habsburg government, mindful of the problems such an event could create for their own efforts, "sought as far as possible to neutralize the impact of the Russian Revolution."⁸⁵² The first public announcement that the industrial workers of St. Petersburg had brought down the Czar was published on the 16th of March, in the Worker's Daily (*Dělnický deník*).⁸⁵³ *Duch času* followed suit on the 20th, lauding the victorious revolution and glorying in its inevitable end in socialism while implicitly drawing lessons from the Russian experience of "[p]rotest against the arrest of groups of workers of central committees for war industry, spontaneous hunger revolts and the incapacity of the government - such were the driving strengths of the workers' movement on the streets of Petrograd."⁸⁵⁴

The Police Commissariat in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau submitted an urgent report on the mood of the population in the district to Lieutenant General Hajeck, Military Commandant Lvov/Lemberg, at the end of March. The report held that "the population remains in general peaceful and must with limited exceptions be described as loyal."⁸⁵⁵ Economic pressures on the inhabitants remained significant - "[t]he constantly increasing difficulties with provisioning, the unbearable inflation and the lack of necessary consumption articles, the reduced quality of goods, the sinking purchasing power of money, the wages which in no way match current conditions...has brought about a dissatisfaction, so that one can speak of a general worsening of

⁸⁵²Milan Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku, 1917-1921* (Ostrava: Krajské nakladatelství v Ostravě, 1957). 44.

⁸⁵³Milan Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku, 1917-1921* (Ostrava: Krajské nakladatelství v Ostravě, 1957). 45.

⁸⁵⁴AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Mar. 22, 1917/35/1/Ruská vítězná revoluce. *Protest proti zatčení dělnické skupiny ústředního výboru pro válečný průmysl, spontanní hladová revolta a neschopnost vlády - takové byly ženoucí síly hnutí dělnictva na petrohradských ulicích.*

⁸⁵⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1442/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 491/1/Stimmungsbericht.

the mood [*Stimmung*] in the hinterland."⁸⁵⁶

These economic concerns, though serious, had as of yet not "anywhere taken on a threatening or serious character. The strike movement among the miners of the district...have proceeded up until now without more serious incidents."⁸⁵⁷ The situation was precarious, though. The "dull resignation" with which the population "has borne the burdens laid upon it" would yield to demonstrations and riots without much pressure - individual differences between workers and overseers or employers, clumsy or cruel treatment from their commanders, or food shortages and delays in provisioning could all result in larger threats to public order.⁸⁵⁸

Awareness of the events of the Russian Revolution had already impacted the state of public opinion. The nature of the events in St. Petersburg seemed almost designed to worsen the challenges facing the district's overseers - the reports were "about hunger as the cause of the Revolution, about the leading role of the workforce there and their growing influence over the new arrangement of affairs..."⁸⁵⁹ These reports had had what the report delicately termed an "inauspicious" influence, most directly on the poorer segments of society, and would give impetus to "the possible latent anti-dynastic or anti-state endeavors of dissatisfied elements..." against which "I will not fail to unhesitatingly act against every subversive tendency discovered with the full exercise of the powers [*Machtmittel*] given through the emergency laws..."⁸⁶⁰

Discussions of the appropriate response continued into April, with the Moravian Statthalter issuing a set of guidelines for directing and limiting public debate over the Russian

⁸⁵⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1442/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 491/1/Stimmungsbericht.

⁸⁵⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1442/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 491/1/Stimmungsbericht.

⁸⁵⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1442/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 491/1/Stimmungsbericht.

⁸⁵⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1442/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 491/1/Stimmungsbericht.

⁸⁶⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1442/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 491/1/Stimmungsbericht.

Revolution on the 14th of April. As news of the events in Russia spread, discussions of their meaning "are being made objects of public debate at organization meetings, which are allowed to be held by the political parties, especially those of the Social Democrats."⁸⁶¹ In these guidelines "the representation of the new order in Russia as a victory for the anti-monarchical principle, the open or hidden defeat [*Bekämpfung*] of monarchical states in general and the glorification of the revolution as such is in every case always to be suppressed with all energy."⁸⁶² Discussions of suffering were also to be avoided or prevented; "it would not be allowed, due to the influence on the mood of the domestic population, when the economic hardships, the hunger of the population, were represented as the sole drivers of the revolutionary movement."⁸⁶³ Also to be suppressed were expressions of sympathy for the Russian proletariat "when in connection therewith the power of the general international proletariat for forcing a peace [*Erzwingung des Friedens*]...is being summoned."⁸⁶⁴

Otherwise, though, the debate was to be allowed to proceed generally without hindrance. "No objection is to be raised, when the Russian Revolution as an event is greeted, that brought freedom not merely to the yoked peoples of Russia but also brought the prospect of freedom closer for us all."⁸⁶⁵ Similarly, "declarations of sympathy for the Russian proletariat are generally

⁸⁶¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 967/Apr. 14, 1917/Zl. 6037/Russische Revolution, Richtlinien fuer die öffentliche Erörterung.

⁸⁶²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 967/Apr. 14, 1917/Zl. 6037/Russische Revolution, Richtlinien fuer die öffentliche Erörterung.

⁸⁶³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 967/Apr. 14, 1917/Zl. 6037/Russische Revolution, Richtlinien fuer die öffentliche Erörterung.

⁸⁶⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 967/Apr. 14, 1917/Zl. 6037/Russische Revolution, Richtlinien fuer die öffentliche Erörterung.

⁸⁶⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 967/Apr. 14, 1917/Zl. 6037/Russische Revolution, Richtlinien fuer die öffentliche Erörterung.

not to be prevented..."⁸⁶⁶ The *Statthalter* also presented positive aims for these discussions, holding that "it would be desirable that the Revolution be portrayed as a result of the disorganization of the government in Russia and a consequence of the corrupt conditions there."⁸⁶⁷ *Schadenfreude* at the misfortune of an enemy, a warning of the consequences of civil disorder and internal unrest, or a morality tale regarding the wages of vice were entirely acceptable; enthusiasm for bringing down Emperors was emphatically not.

Several threads thus came together in March and April of 1917. The continually worsening economic situation, especially in terms of the food supply but also involving clothing, soap, lamp oil, and other necessary articles, led to further deterioration in living standards. Worsening unrest, largely driven by this deterioration, angered and frightened Ostravsko's military overseers and thereby prompted increasingly sharper measures of military coercion. The outbreak of the Russian Revolution in February and the arrival of news to that effect in Ostravsko in March both encouraged revolutionary tendencies among the population and encouraged paranoid tendencies among the military men administering the district. Finally, Emperor Karl's new administration sought to pursue a much more conciliatory policy in internal administration, one that aimed to return to pre-war administrative norms anchored in the idea of a *Rechtsstaat*.

As part of this effort to reinscribe legality and the ensuing political engagement into Habsburg administration Karl's new government issued an Imperial Decree on the 18th of March, 1917. This decree, regarding the regulation of wage and labor conditions in military concerns, sought to change several important facets of the experience of military labor. Military concerns

⁸⁶⁶ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 967/Apr. 14, 1917/Zl. 6037/Russische Revolution, Richtlinien fuer die öffentliche Erörterung.

⁸⁶⁷ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 967/Apr. 14, 1917/Zl. 6037/Russische Revolution, Richtlinien fuer die öffentliche Erörterung.

were defined under §2 as concerns either directly administered by the military or under military supervision according to §18 of the War Production Law of 1912, and §1 held that workers in these concerns "are to be provided a wage appropriate to their professional capacities and accomplishments determined through their respective living and labor relationships."⁸⁶⁸

As a way of actualizing this positive yet abstract notion, §3 directed the creation of Complaint Commissions (*Beschwerdekommissionen*). Empowered to decide on all labor matters, these commissions were to be headed by a representative of the Ministry for Home Defense (*Landesverteidigungsministerium*) and to include one member named by the appropriate minister (depending on the industry), one judge named by the Minister of Justice, one representative of employers, and one representative of employees.⁸⁶⁹ In proceedings before the Commission, the parties of the dispute could be represented, by other workers or employers, by state officials, by representatives of trade organizations, or other parties. Should employers violate a policy or decision of the Commission, they would face arrest for up to three months or a fine of up to 20,000 crowns. Should workers who had not been ceded the right to exit their employment by the Commission do so, however, they would face three months arrest or a fine of up to a 1,000 crowns.⁸⁷⁰ The interests of the state were thus represented by three of the five members of the Commission, which practically speaking meant that these commissions did not substantially improve conditions for workers in Ostravsko.⁸⁷¹

Also in the spring of 1917, Karl and his government began consideration of a resumption in parliamentary governance. Prime Minister Clam-Martinic had first floated the idea at a

⁸⁶⁸*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1917). *LII*. Stück, Nr. 122. 289.

⁸⁶⁹*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1917). *LII*. Stück, Nr. 122. 289-290.

⁸⁷⁰*Reichsgesetzblatt* (1917). *LII*. Stück, Nr. 122. 290-291.

⁸⁷¹Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí*. 45.

January 12th meeting with representatives of the Czech Union (*Český svaz*), but in the following two months protests and resistance from primarily German-nationalists and Christian Socialists stymied plans to move forward. The Czech Union strongly supported the plan, however - at their first plenary session, on the 17th of March, the Union adopted a resolution calling for the immediate re-opening of the *Reichsrat*.⁸⁷²

The Russian Revolution gave increased impetus towards a resumption of parliamentary governance - a lack of public support seemed suddenly much more dangerous than it had before the Romanovs fell. The second main external impetus was of course Wilson's declaration of war on Germany, on the 6th of April 1917. Fears of imminent (or at least inevitable) defeat significantly increased the significance of Wilson's good graces and thus of a democratic internal arrangement. During a train journey between Marburg/Maribor and Vienna on the 11th of April, Emperor Karl conclusively abandoned rule by decree, and two weeks later, on the 26th of April, the first day for the *Reichsrat* to reconvene was set to be the 30th of May, 1917.⁸⁷³ The body as it had been when prorogued (with some changes - for instance, Masaryk and Beneš were removed for neither appearing nor excusing their absence) officially reconvened as scheduled with the full participation of the Czech parties.

Similarly, Karl decided on an amnesty decree, to be issued on his birthday, the 2nd of July. Šedivý highlights a number of advantages to this decree, which would apply to all political crimes except those committed by individuals who had fled the Monarchy or gone over to the enemy. "By these means the Emperor attempted to place relationships with 'his' nations on new foundations; it sent out a signal to the Western Powers, among whom he was precisely then

⁸⁷²Šedivý, *Češi, české země, a velká válka, 1914-1918*. 297.

⁸⁷³Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, *Kaiser Karl. Aus Geheimmappe seines Kabinettschefs* (Vienna: Amalthea-Verlag, 1929) 390-391; Šedivý, *Češi, české země, a velká válka, 1914-1918*. 300.

sounding out the possibilities for concluding peace; it brought insecurity to representatives of resisting exiles."⁸⁷⁴ It also brought freedom to Karel Kramář, Alois Rašín, and Václav Klobáček, and thereby enraged many in German-nationalist and military circles.⁸⁷⁵

The resurrection of democratic governance (to the extent that the reopening of the *Reichsrat* represented such) did not lead to a groundswell of support for the further prosecution of the war. In May *Duch času* reported on a speech to the assembled body by the Social-Democratic representative Dr. Cohn calling for peace to the people, a war on war, and the unification of the proletariat of all countries to forestall the victory of "Marshal Hunger."⁸⁷⁶ Also in the speech was a biting attack on military government, that "military Caesarism, that ultimately desires through prisons to compel the labor of free men."⁸⁷⁷

Parliamentary privileges extended beyond speechifying. The Social Democratic representatives from Ostravsko, with Cingr and Prokeš in the lead, exercised their right to interpellate government officials to advance the interests and convey the complaints of their constituents. The political and military administrators in Ostravsko now had to deal with not only the by now accustomed pressure from below in the form of strikes, protests, and demonstrations but also pressure from above, from Karl, from his newly appointed heads of the ministries, and from *Reichsrat* delegates.

⁸⁷⁴Šedivý, *Češi, české země, a velká válka, 1914-1918*. 308.

⁸⁷⁵Holger Herwig, *The First World War*. 242.

⁸⁷⁶AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/May 11, 1917/57/2/Válka válce! - Mír lidstvu!

⁸⁷⁷AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/May 11, 1917/57/2/Válka válce! - Mír lidstvu!

Creeping Starvation

The hunger strikes, demonstrations, and crises racking the Monarchy in the winter of 1916-1917 provided the impetus to overcome Hungarian objections and led to the creation of a Joint Food Committee (*Gemeinsame Ernährungsausschuss*) headed by Major General Ottokar Landwehr. This Committee was directly answerable to Emperor Karl, but itself had no authority.⁸⁷⁸

The municipality of Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau began discussing rationing for the sale of bread and flour in early March of 1917, with the Provisioning Committee (*Zásobovací výbor*) aiming to tighten control over distribution and consumption. Workers in the steel and coal industries remained largely untouched by this proposal, since "according to the wishes of the Ministry of War workers employed in war industries were directly provisioned with foodstuffs through their employers."⁸⁷⁹

Hunger protests and demonstrations increasingly concerned those officials responsible for the maintenance of public order. At the end of March, The Moravian Statthalter issued an order to the District Commissioners, Court Councillors, and Police Directorate and Commissariat leaders in Moravia and Ostravsko to immediately and especially provide telephonic or telegraphic reports of demonstrations caused by hunger or provisioning problems. These were also to be reported in a summary character on a monthly basis.⁸⁸⁰

Leading figures in Vienna were increasingly skeptical of the Monarchy's ability to endure the terrible and worsening conditions brought about by the war. In a meeting with German

⁸⁷⁸Holger Herwig, *The First World War*. 275.

⁸⁷⁹AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Mar. 13, 1917/31/2/Prodej chleba a mouky v Mor. Ostravě bude rayonován.

⁸⁸⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Mar. 31, 1917/Pr. 6175/Wocheninformation ueber russophile, antimilitaristische oder sonst der Kriegfuehrung nachteilige Erscheinungen.

Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg on the 16th of March, Czernin informed him that "the Monarchy is at the end its endurance," as the food situation was disastrous; hunger was "epidemic" in Cisleithania and reserves of raw materials for industrial operations would not last even until the beginning of winter.⁸⁸¹

Matters continued to deteriorate in Ostravsko. Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau established soup establishments, or "people's war kitchens."⁸⁸² Though previously discussed, these kitchens were not early realized due to the District Commissariat's refusal to release food stores to the municipality for such purposes. Now, though, supplies for three months of operation were to be released to provide nutrition for the poor.⁸⁸³ Meanwhile, heavy industrial concerns went forward with plans for expansion. The Vítkovice Steelworks planned construction of two new blast furnaces at facilities in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, the Karolina mine planned a new coking oven, the directors of the Wilczek mining company in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau prepared construction for thirty new coking ovens there, and the Austrian Mining and Steelworks began construction on a new blast furnace at their steelworks in Třinec/Trzynec.⁸⁸⁴

Industrial expansion was not matched by agricultural expansion. Domestic supplies remained far below requirements, and Arz von Straussenberg observed in July that "*Because of the extreme shortage of supplies, it is only through imports from Rumania* that the Monarchy is in the position of halfway coming through until the new harvest..." however, "the supply thread from Rumania was a tenuous one at best, though, and one that led through Berlin...every

⁸⁸¹ÖstA/HHStA/PA I/Botschaftsarchiv Berlin 536/Mar. 16, 1917/Protocol. Cited in: Holger Herwig, *The First World War*. 279.

⁸⁸²AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Mar. 8, 1917/29/3/Obecní polévkové ústavy v Mor. Ostravě

⁸⁸³AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Mar. 8, 1917/29/3/Obecní polévkové ústavy v Mor. Ostravě

⁸⁸⁴AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Mar. 8, 1917/29/3/Průmyslové projekty na Ostravsku

negotiation put the Monarchy further into German debt."⁸⁸⁵

The shortages visible everywhere led to Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, as in Vienna and elsewhere, to introduce rationing. The original schema was months in the making. The regulations regarding the operation of the rationing system were drafted in April, and completed on the 18th. The basic elements of the system were straightforward. Ration cards were to be distributed to each of the listed inhabitants of the municipality on a weekly basis. These cards could then be used to allow purchasing of the corresponding quantity of bread (initially, with other foodstuffs being added as time passed). Importantly, the ration card was not a purchasing coupon - customers could only purchase the quantity for which they had ration cards, but they still had to pay for their food. The merchant or baker then collected these tokens for return to the municipality as proof of legitimate sale. The flour and other foodstuffs for the bread were purchased from the municipal stores in cash by authorized bakers and merchants.⁸⁸⁶

By implementation, the ration cards had become more limited in one important respect. Mine workers, members of consumption societies (*Konsumvereine*), and other workers at institutions with their own food stores were required to decide whether to belong to those institutions or to be enrolled in the rationing pool for the general population. The ration cards received would only be valid for the selected system, so a Vítkovice steelworker could choose to either receive his food from the Steelworks cafeterias and stockpiles or from the bakeries and merchants supplied from municipal stockpiles, but not both.⁸⁸⁷ This system began operation on

⁸⁸⁵Gary Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy*. 139. Emphasis in the original.

⁸⁸⁶AMO/Kč 715/749/Mob 35/Různě/Apr. 18, 1917/Vorschriften über die Neuordnung (Rayonierung) des Bezuges von Mehl- und Brot in der Stadt Mähr.-Ostrau.

⁸⁸⁷AMO/Kč 715/749/Mob 35/Různě/Jul. 7, 1917/Kundmachung über die Einführung der Rayonierung des Brot- und Mehlbezuges.

the 8th of July, 1917.⁸⁸⁸

The harvest for 1917-1918 was disastrous, producing less than a third of the Monarchy's pre-war average, which itself was only hovered around being sufficient for domestic consumption. Generally, "...it must be said that supplies varied a good deal across the Monarchy, city-dwellers being most deprived. Comparative plenty prevailed in central Hungary and in the Czech districts of Bohemia, but real misery stalked Dalmatia, Istria, Bosnia, and other less fertile areas; Korosex told parliament in November, 1917, that the food shortage was extremely bad in Dalmatia and that Bosnia was gripped by famine."⁸⁸⁹

Cisleithanian food distribution privileged the armed forces most of all, but beyond that the industrial labor force occupied the top of the distribution priority ranking. The winter challenged even the most privileged, however - "By the end of the year, the *k.u.k.* Army was once again down to barely 2 days of flour and vegetable rations, and 4 days of green feed for its horses. The Army's daily needs consisted of 240 wagons of flour, 40 of vegetables, and 250 of green feed: its actual consignments were 158 wagons of flour, 1-2 of vegetables, and 101 of green feed. Flour rations in some units were down to 280 g. per man per day..."⁸⁹⁰ Beyond these ugly figures, "the military had used up their reserve stocks and merely were existing hand to mouth. Weekly rations were down to two hundred grams of bread, sometimes replaced by three ounces of corn meal, and six ounces of meat for troops in the front and half of that for troops behind the line. Dried vegetables were the main staple of diet and horse meat a delicacy seldom seen."⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁸AMO/Kč 715/749/Mob 35/Různě/Jul. 7, 1917/Kundmachung über die Einführung der Rayonierung des Brot- und Mehlbezuges.

⁸⁸⁹Arthur May, *The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy*. 664.

⁸⁹⁰Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918*. 344.

⁸⁹¹Gunther Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*. 211.

The general population fared much worse. Holger Herwig notes that by January of 1918 "civilians were down to 23 g. of meat per person per day...General Landwehr...was fully aware that starvation haunted the populace. The consumption of potatoes had fallen to just 70 g. per person per day – compared with 357 in Germany and down from 493 in 1913....The Austrian half of the Empire received just 48 of the required 273 grain cars per day..."⁸⁹² On the 11th of January, Count Maximilian Coudenhove, now Governor of Bohemia, wrote to Foreign Minister Czernin that "At best, the reserves in Bohemia will last until the middle of April, but only if Bohemia does not have to supply other lands. In other crown-lands the situation is much worse; there, starvation has already begun..."⁸⁹³

The provisions so desperately needed to keep the inhabitants of the Monarchy alive through the winter were only to be had from Imperial Germany, whose more efficient systems of production and organization were supplemented by rigorous exploitation of its conquered territories. "Speaking for the Imperial War Ministry, Baron von Raberau said on January 20, 1918: 'Whether Austria will be in a position to last out through February is questionable. Without any kind of reserves people will be living day by day from hand to mouth.' Germany would have to furnish provisions, he made clear, if the Monarchy were to continue to fight. Seidler and Landwehr reinforced that logic, warning that 'without help from outside, masses of the people will be dying in a few weeks...'"⁸⁹⁴ Count Czernin reinforced Seidler, Landwehr, and Raberau's pleas in a missive to Hohenlohe: "In case Germany does not want to, or cannot, help us, nothing else remains for us but to submit ourselves unconditionally to England."⁸⁹⁵ German-supplied

⁸⁹²Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918*. 361.

⁸⁹³Cited in: Z.A.B. Zeman, *The Breakup of the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918*. 134.

⁸⁹⁴Arthur May, *The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy*. 668.

⁸⁹⁵Cited in: Gary Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy*. 169.

foodstuffs were absolutely essential to Habsburg endurance during the last year of the war, and "Within 48 hours, Berlin promised 125,000 tons of grain and 8,000 tons of wheat from Romanian depots...the Bavarian government promised to reroute 2,000 to 3,000 freight cars of potatoes to Vienna."⁸⁹⁶

That Infernal Music: The Steelworks

On the 10th of April, the dining hall of the Vitkovice Ironworks' new rolling mill (*Walzwerk*) hosted a spontaneous protest. The workers arrived for lunch as usual, but as they were served they realized that no potatoes were to be served to them, they "sprang up on the tables and benches and stormily protested..."⁸⁹⁷ Order was only restored when the plant director, Spitzer, authorized the release of bread to the workers as a replacement.⁸⁹⁸

Later that afternoon at the Vitkovice complex, at approximately 6:00 PM, around three hundred employees of the steel casting plant (*Gussstahlfabrik*) gathered before the plant's administrative office to demand a response to their wage demands (a fifty percent increase across the board, requested on the 6th of April) and to threaten a strike until their demands were met. The plant engineers sought to avoid making any binding agreements, but the workers refused an unconditional resumption of work. Their military leader, Colonel Maculan, when apprised of the situation arrived and promised that the news from the Ministry of Public Works regarding their wage demands would arrive within eight days. He then demanded an immediate resumption of work, the workers doing so.⁸⁹⁹ Their wage increase though, according to Senior Engineer Oskar

⁸⁹⁶Holger Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria-Hungary, 1914-1918*. 362.

⁸⁹⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Meldung.

⁸⁹⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Meldung.

⁸⁹⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Meldung.

Christen, would likely be at most fifteen to twenty percent.⁹⁰⁰

The following morning (the 11th), around 8:00, another crowd of workers some two hundred strong gathered in front of the main office of the Vítkovice construction office (*Baubüro*). There they sent a deputation to their concern leader, Building Inspector Fiala, to request a wage increase; Fiala answered only that he had to negotiate any increase with the Directorate, upon which the workers peacefully returned to work. A similar scene took place at the boiler factory that afternoon involving a group of some three hundred workers.⁹⁰¹

At around noon, almost the entire workforce for the Vítkovice New Steel and Rolling Mill (*Walzdreherei*) came in a body to Director Spitzer's office. They had gone to the cafeteria there for lunch, and "had seen that for lunch they were given empty soup, turnips with corn meal and beef without potatoes," and in response they declared to the Director that "they would not purchase this food, as by such a meal they could not perform the demanded work."⁹⁰² They then proceeded to get into an argument wherein the Director offered bread but not without receipt of rationing coupons, an offer the workers laughed at.

The crowd proceeded to peacefully demonstrate outside the cafeteria, at which point Colonel Maculan, the military leader responsible for the Ironworks, arrived. Selecting five workers from the crowd, Maculan interviewed them as to the cause of the demonstration and then escorted them back into the cafeteria; now the soup was "not empty but had been prepared with peas. The workers however explained, that previously no peas had been in the soup."⁹⁰³

⁹⁰⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Meldung.

⁹⁰¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Zl. 82resad/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹⁰²By 'empty', the workers meant that the soup had been only broth. ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Zl. 82resad/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹⁰³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Zl. 82resad/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

Colonel Maculan's response to the peas conundrum was not recorded. His response to the workers' refusal to work in the face of such provisioning, though, was quite clear.

His first act was to send to Station Command Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau for military support. Several hours later, at around 4:00 PM, a company from Infantry Regiment Nr. 15 arrived. Until their arrival the entire factory complex had been standing perfectly idle. As the infantry marched into the square, however, perhaps half of the demonstrating workers returned to work out the remainder of their shift. Colonel Maculan then instructed the soldiers to return the workers to their duty, and thus "the remainder were...by means of the arrived company hauled off to work."⁹⁰⁴ Colonel Maculan then identified eight workers as "alleged ringleaders" who were "by order of the military leader placed under arrest."⁹⁰⁵ At no point did the workers disturb the public peace. Their mood following Maculan's crackdown was reported to be very tense, and the Vítkovice workers muttered of a general strike if no satisfactory wage increase was forthcoming.

On the next day, the 12th, several similar scenes took place in other parts of the Vítkovice complex. Around 9:00 AM, approximately one hundred workers assigned to the blast furnaces put down their tools and gathered by the main office to lodge complaints about the poor food and to demand higher wages. They were there "put off similarly as in the other concerns, at which point they returned to work."⁹⁰⁶ Around 1:00 that afternoon, the workforce for the boiler factory, some four hundred strong, collected in the factory courtyard and declared that they "did not wish to work before they found out how the wage improvement stood."⁹⁰⁷ The head of the concern,

⁹⁰⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Zl. 82resad/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹⁰⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 12, 1917/Zl. 82resad/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹⁰⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 13, 1917/Zl. 83res/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹⁰⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 13, 1917/Zl. 83res/Eisenwerk Witkowitz,

Senior Engineer Baumann, told them that they would certainly receive an improvement but he was unable to promise them anything about the extent thereof. However, he was unsuccessful in persuading the workers to return to work until he threatened to summon military assistance to compel them to work, at which point "some reasonable elements appealed to the [other] workers, and they collectively returned to work."⁹⁰⁸

The workforce for the machine shops also gathered together during their lunch break and sent a deputation to try to speak with the factory leadership regarding their wage demands. Instead of meeting with the deputation, though, the factory leader forbade the workers' gathering and contacted Colonel Maculan. At approximately 11:30 AM a half company of infantrymen from the Infantry Regiment Nr. 15 marched into the factory courtyard next to the machine shop cafeteria and took up stations. A crowd of curious onlookers, according to one count around two thousand men and women, proceeded to gather in hushed anticipation of the beginning of the afternoon shift.⁹⁰⁹

Once the shift signal sounded at 1:00 PM, about half of the workers began their shift; the rest remained standing outside in a group. Maculan then ordered the standing group to begin work as well. In response scattered yells from the assembled crowd of onlookers floated across the square: "Give us potatoes!" "We won't work for turnips!" "Give us more money!" Colonel Maculan immediately ordered arrest patrols (*Verhaftspatrouillen*) sent out for the hecklers and any ringleaders, the dispersal of the crowd, and the coercion of the remaining workers into beginning their assigned shift. The infantry duly deployed, and another shift began.⁹¹⁰

Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹⁰⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 13, 1917/Zl. 83res/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹⁰⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 13, 1917/Zl. 83res/Eisenwerk Witkowitz, Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹¹⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Apr. 13, 1917/Zl. 83res/Eisenwerk Witkowitz,

One police agent reported overhearing four steelworkers discuss the state of the war on the 21st of April on a worker's train to Opava/Troppau. They opined "that the poor and the workers have the greatest war burdens to bear...the end of the war would not be in the field, but instead have to be compelled in the hinterland by the proletariat..."⁹¹¹ They further declared that "the people need have no fear of the military..." as one reported that he had "spoken with a soldier of a unit in Kateřinky/Katharein and [the soldier] said that in Kateřinky/Katharein there was not a single soldier, who wished to go against the people." These points "were heard with agreement from the other workers in the train car."⁹¹² Coercion may have restored order, but it had markedly failed to win hearts or minds in Vítkovice/Witkowitz.

Lohnerhöhungsbewegung unter der Arbeiterschaft.

⁹¹¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/Apr. 30, 1917/Meldung.

⁹¹²ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/Apr. 30, 1917/Meldung.

Trudging Around the May Pole: The First of May

The high holy day of industrial labor was intended to be unremarked in Ostravsko. Milan Otáhal argued that "neither of the two Social Democratic parties had any intention to organize a demonstration on this day for 1917, just as in the previous war years."⁹¹³ *Svornost's* April 26th issue published an editorial calling on the workers in Ostravsko to "voluntarily renounce also this year's celebration of the 1st of May", arguing that "[m]ore than one hundred thousand workers in Ostravsko, in the mines, in the factories, and in the mills are obligated under the iron law of necessity on this day, just as millions of workers in all of Austria, to work..."⁹¹⁴

However, worker pressure quickly brought about a new situation. The Moravian Statthalter issued a top-secret decree on April 28th, in which he ordered that "for the workers who wish to hold a holiday no difficulties are to be prepared..."⁹¹⁵ In the same decree, he conveyed the War Ministry's decision that militarized workers and employees of militarized concerns were similarly to be left alone to celebrate May Day by all military officials and officers. Meetings open to the public and meetings held in the open were to remain forbidden, but "should such gatherings and processions occur regardless without legitimation, intervention is only to be undertaken when thereby violence takes place or when for local reasons the event must be characterized as absolutely intolerable."⁹¹⁶

On the 30th, *Duch času* printed a call to the Czech workforce to participate in a public peoples' meeting at 10:00 AM with the program of "the meaning of the 1st of May and the

⁹¹³Milan Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku, 1917-1921*. 47.

⁹¹⁴*Svornost*, 26 Apr. 1917. Cited in: Milan Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku, 1917-1921*. 47.

⁹¹⁵ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/Apr. 28, 1917/Zl. 7907/Sozialdemokratische Maifeier 1917.

⁹¹⁶ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/Apr. 28, 1917/Zl. 7907/Sozialdemokratische Maifeier 1917.

question of peace."⁹¹⁷ At this point, "according to the state of things in recent days there is this year in the factories an increasing possibility of a cessation of work on the 1st of May."⁹¹⁸ As it happened, almost all of the industrial concerns in the area held a holiday for the 1st of May, with the Vítkovice Steelworks being the sole exception.⁹¹⁹ A great meeting took place at the National House (*Národní dům*) in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau at 10:00 AM, organized by Štěpánek, Marzin, and Klimša, and Dr. František Soukup, the Social Democratic *Reichsrat* representative from Prague, addressed the crowd.⁹²⁰

The meeting resulted in a resolution adopted by the "gathered men and women of the working peoples," which aimed to announce "in consciousness of full agreement with the entire working peoples of Austria and Hungary...the decisive readiness for an immediate peace without conquest and without humiliation of any of the warring countries and raises protest against every lengthening of the bloodshed and the annihilation of human lives and peoples' welfare."⁹²¹ Further, the resolution "greeted with joyful concurrence the negotiations begun between the united parties of Germany, Austria, and Hungary with foreign brother parties, which aims to give the brotherly solidarity of the proletariat of all countries new expression...with passionate participation the gathering greets the proletariat of Russia, which in its heroic struggle freed not only itself, but instead all of Europe from the yoke and scourge of Tzarism..."⁹²² Finally, the gathering aimed "to set all the power of the individual and the collective together, in order to

⁹¹⁷AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Apr. 30, 1917/52/4/České dělnictvo a oslava 1. května na Ostravsku!

⁹¹⁸AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/Apr. 30, 1917/52/4/České dělnictvo a oslava 1. května na Ostravsku!

⁹¹⁹AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/May 4, 1917/54/1/Oslava 1. května.

⁹²⁰AMO/ND9/15a/[no i.č.]/Duch času/May 4, 1917/54/1/Oslava 1. května.

⁹²¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/May 1, 1917/Resolution.

⁹²²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/May 1, 1917/Resolution.

assist in the necessity of a quick breakthrough of a general peace."⁹²³ The general thrust of this resolution was in perfect accord with the stated policy of Karl's government; with the possible exception of the lauded return of the Socialist International police agents had no quibble with it.

Another gathering, taking place in Bronner Hall, brought together the Union of Austrian Miners at 3:00 PM that day. The chairman was Karl Rožnovský, and over twelve hundred miners gathered to hear Franz Riegl, secretary of the Union, speak. The theme of his extensive remarks was peace - the workers wanted peace, the government was seeking peace, peace was necessary. The general resolution was accepted unanimously. The translator (Riegl spoke in Czech), Frau Kluścinska, translated the speech and resolution into Polish, adding "that the world war would presumably bring about an independent Polish state."⁹²⁴

At 7:30 PM under the chairmanship of Johann Lorenz, over six hundred workers of the Union of Austrian Iron- and Metalworkers gathered for a general meeting in the Worker's Home in Vítkovice/Witkowitz. Dr. Viktor Haas addressed the crowd along similar lines to the other Social Democratic speakers - peace was the watchword. Haas further elaborated that nationalism, capitalism, and imperialism were responsible for the war in the first place, and that it was to be hoped that the Vítkovice workforce would tolerate management's decision to continue operations for the 1st of May. The general resolution was also accepted, as Eduard Gasprzik and Emanuel Chobot translated Haas' speech into Czech and Polish.⁹²⁵

⁹²³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/May 1, 1917/Resolution.

⁹²⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/May 1, 1917/Zl. I-346/Bericht.

⁹²⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1019/May 1, 1917/Zl. I-348/Bericht.

Hamsterei und das Plündern: Increasing Militarization, Increasing Violence

On the 19th of May, 1917, Military Command Kraków submitted a report to the War Ministry regarding “the renewed strike movements in the Ostrava-Karviná coal district.” The cause, they reported, was “shortage of foodstuffs, especially due to the discontinuous and interrupted delivery of food.”⁹²⁶ Their recommendations were familiar. Military Command Kraków urged continuous imports of foodstuffs, a commission to investigate (and presumably increase) workers' wages, “barracksing of the workers, their supplies, and their clothes, and as most promising of success, transitioning the coal district to full military administration.”⁹²⁷ This last point referenced the contemplated appointment of a military plenipotentiary to administer the coal district, which was to bear fruit three weeks later. The appointment of Major-General Heinrich von Naumann as the plenipotentiary of Army High Command for the Ostrava-Karviná district took place on the 6th of June, 1917.⁹²⁸

Von Naumann, as plenipotentiary, exercised the same range of powers as a Military Commandant would elsewhere. Beyond that, all of the organs of military administration in Ostravsko - all of the militarized operations, militia labor departments, coal labor departments, the commanders of these departments, the area military leadership, the Coal Cadre Commandants, the various Station Commands, and all of the military functions related to them - were made directly answerable to von Naumann.⁹²⁹ This centralization of responsibility for the

⁹²⁶ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1917, Abt. 10. Carton 38, Nr. 41/7(634). "Ausstandsbewegung im Kohlenreviere Mähr.-Ostrau – Ursache – Anträge." May 19th, 1917.

⁹²⁷ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1917, Abt. 10. Carton 38, Nr. 41/7(634). "Ausstandsbewegung im Kohlenreviere Mähr.-Ostrau – Ursache – Anträge." May 19th, 1917.

⁹²⁸ÖstA/KA Zst KM 1917. No Carton. (Präs. 1-7/74). "Über die nachträgliche Beförderung des GM. Mit Tit.u.Char. d.Rhstds. Heinrich von NAUMANN." July 30th, 1917.

⁹²⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Jun. 16, 1917/Pr. 2301/3715/L/Ernennung GM. von Naumann zum Mil. Kmdten. -Stellvertreter im mähr.-schles. und westgalizischem Kohlenreviere.

maintenance of order in Ostravsko essentially realized the military ambition to organize and direct civilian life on behalf of the war effort.

On the 18th of June, 1917, two hundred and forty miners at the Austria shaft refused to enter the mine, on the grounds that they were hungry, and that "someone ought give them food."⁹³⁰ The miners gathered in the plaza before the mine shaft, grumbling, as their Coal Cadre Commandant, Lieutenant Ritschel, emerged and demanded their return to work. More effective, though, was the news that food would arrive at the shaft. As soon as the miners were told they announced themselves satisfied and returned to work peacefully.⁹³¹

Not only miners protested food shortages. On the 8th of June between four and five hundred people protested potato shortages in front of the Marianské Hory/Marienberg food storage building (*Lebensmittelmagazin*), while on the 13th some fifty women protested the same at the Vítkovice/Witkowitz City Hall. One hundred and fifty women demonstrated on the 22nd in front of the City Hall in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau because of reductions in their bread and flour ration cards. Numerous hunger demonstrations broke out on the 23rd, with the largest in Michalkovice/Michalkowitz, Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, Poruba/Poremba, and Polish Lutynia/Leuthen. In the latter, the mob broke into the municipal chancellery (*Gemeindekanzlei*), threatened the bread commissioner, destroyed a table, and made off with two hundred bread rationing cards. Five people were arrested, but conveyed before the District Court in Přívoz/Oderberg instead of a military court. The following day some two hundred women assembled at the Vítkovice/Witkowitz City Hall to complain about the potato supply. On the 26th, about three hundred women returned there to complain about potato and bean shortages, and

⁹³⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Jun. 18, 1917/Zl. 242/Arbeiterbewegung am Austriaschachte in Karwin. The police agent reporting described the miners as "hungover".

⁹³¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Jun. 18, 1917/Zl. 242/Arbeiterbewegung am Austriaschachte in Karwin.

they were given some of the available dried vegetables. Two days later another crowd of two hundred or so women demonstrated at the City Hall in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau in the morning and another hundred and fifty in the afternoon, due to potato shortages.⁹³²

In early July, the Vítkovice Steelworks briefly became the center of a storm of looting and mob violence. On the evening of the 3rd of July, Central Director Alfred Sonnenschein sent an urgent telegram to Minister of War Stöger-Steiner. In it, he requested "with all emphasis the use of my uncolored report for appropriate measures," as "the larger area of factory operations, which almost exclusively work for military aims, can only be secured by the durable and sufficient protection of the military administration and such is still not available."⁹³³ The unrest had begun the previous day, Monday the 2nd of July, and "plundering of Steelworks and private property have taken place and there are dead and wounded...which in the later hours was temporarily stemmed by armed force."⁹³⁴

The disorders had begun earlier that day, with a strike among the steelworkers which quickly spread to miners working at nearby coal mines, while some eight hundred people demonstrated at the Till bakery in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau. That afternoon the military deployed against the crowds in both municipalities, and while the crowd in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau dispersed peacefully the Vítkovice mobs did not. The military fired on the crowd, leaving five people dead and thirteen people seriously wounded.⁹³⁵

As a consequence of the looting and associated destruction of property the Steelworks suffered approximately half a million crowns worth of damages. In the course of that night some

⁹³²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Jun. 30, 1917/Pr. 504/10/Monatsbericht - June.

⁹³³AVZ/VHHT/53/303/Jul. 3, 1917/Sr. Exzellenz den Herrn Kriegsminister.

⁹³⁴AVZ/VHHT/53/303/Jul. 3, 1917/Sr. Exzellenz den Herrn Kriegsminister.

⁹³⁵Josef Kolejka, *Revoluční dělnické hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku, 1917-1921* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1957) 53.

nine hundred men were rushed to the central works in Vítkovice/Witkowitz, which sufficed to prevent further rioting and looting in the central districts. However, many of these men were quickly moved out to aid in suppression of the same in the suburbs and nearby municipalities where looting continued unchecked.⁹³⁶

Mob violence also broke out in German Lutynia/Leuten and Karviná/Karwin. Members of a crowd of "Ostravan proletariat" marching to Karviná/Karwin were reportedly presented with "written plundering permits" (*schriftliche Bewilligung zum erlaubten Plündern*) by the leaders of the mob in true Habsburg style, and thus legitimated the mob went to work.⁹³⁷ Among the shops emptied were the general store of one Mr. Topiarz and an establishment with a Mr. Goldberger as proprietor. These permits were of course fake, as one of the perpetrators, a streetcar conductor named Anna Pirla, found out during her interview with the police. She was subsequently charged before the District Court in Fryštát/Freistadt.⁹³⁸

Another mob gathered on the evening of the 4th of July in Přívoz/Oderfurt. Built out of residents of the nearby Georg mine settlement and demonstrators returning from Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, thousands of people had collected by 8:30. Reinforcements for the local Gendarme, police, and military forces were unavailable, "as at this time alarming reports were being received from all parts of the police district," and the essentially unrestrained mob turned quickly to plundering local shops.⁹³⁹ The lieutenant in command of the local military forces, Senior Lieutenant Simon Melnařík, took command of all available security forces and "with

⁹³⁶AVZ/VHHT/53/303/Jul. 9, 1917/Sr. Exzellenz dem Herrn k.u.k. Kriegsminister.

⁹³⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Jul. 13, 1917/Zl. 509/Bergarbeiterstreik am Johannschachte in Karwin beigelegt.

⁹³⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Jul. 13, 1917/Zl. 509/Bergarbeiterstreik am Johannschachte in Karwin beigelegt.

⁹³⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

great effort" forced the mob apart down the various alleys surrounding the Eugenplatz and Bahnhofstrasse, and the dispatch of military assistance after midnight allowed the restoration of order by around 2:00 AM.⁹⁴⁰ Twenty-three shops in the area were looted during this incident, and five persons arrested for looting and delivered to the district court for prosecution.

The next day Melnařík and recently arrived police official Dr. Rudolf Fukal, author of the police report on the incident, set out to prevent a recurrence of the previous night's unrest. Four ten-man patrols roamed the streets, fifty-nine soldiers watched over the plundered shops (some of which opened for business), two platoons were assigned to the mineral oil refinery there, twenty-two men to the chemical plant, one platoon to the wheel factory (*Räderfabrik*), and one platoon to the municipal food storage. In the outskirts of the city an infantry company provided the men for four ten-man patrols, ten men to guard the Hechter flour mill, and some fifty men to act as a reserve in the local training barracks. An additional three platoons stood in reserve at the City Hall, where Fukal and Melnařík stationed themselves.⁹⁴¹

These measures allowed "gatherings of loot-hungry elements...to be smothered as seeds," but by the 6th unrest resurfaced.⁹⁴² While negotiating with the some thousand-strong workforce of the Northern Rail's workshops there, whose threatened strike would necessitate significantly heightened security measures, Dr. Fukal heard a series of shots ring out. Ten men patrolling near the Willert mixed-wares shop saw a crowd of some hundreds break into the store and begin looting. Corporal Johann Seibert, commanding the patrol, ordered shots to be fired into the air to frighten the crowd into dispersing. These shots also worked to summon aid, though the reinforcements only managed to confiscate some of the stolen goods, and four looters were

⁹⁴⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

⁹⁴¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

⁹⁴²ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

placed under arrest.⁹⁴³

Once Senior Lieutenant Melnařík arrived, though, he ordered the immediate arrest of Corporal Seibert and the dissolution of his patrol for "actions contrary to instruction."⁹⁴⁴ The volleys of Seibert's patrol brought a threatening crowd to the streets. The military managed to clear the streets, "although the radicalized [*fanatisiert*] crowd answered with thrown stones and insulting calls like 'you [all] are not allowed to shoot,' 'shoot us down if you can,' 'we'll show you,' and 'we will do it as in Russia.'"⁹⁴⁵ Afterwards, Melnařík and Fukal left for the train station to update security there.

Meanwhile, in the city suburb (*unteres Stadtteil*), another mob began to assemble. The officer in command there, Senior Lieutenant Issler of the Rifle Regiment Nr. 22, ordered the crowd dispersed and "at the same time issued a warning to the demonstrators to follow ordinances and orders, otherwise violence and eventually armed force would be used."⁹⁴⁶ Some ninety minutes later, at around 5:30 PM, near one of the few as of yet unplundered shops in the area, the Kulka mixed-wares shop, Issler received a message that a large mob had formed and was moving in that direction. Taking command of a nearby ten-man patrol from the Rifle Regiment Nr. 20, Issler moved on the mob. However, he discovered that the mob had also moved on him; some six hundred people, mostly adult men armed with clubs and stones, approached his position. Immediately upon sighting the mob, Issler ordered the street blockaded and at a remove of twenty feet ordered the mob "to take not one step further, but to disperse," a command he

⁹⁴³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

⁹⁴⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

⁹⁴⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

⁹⁴⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

repeated several times.⁹⁴⁷ In response to his last attempt, the mob threw a salvo of stones and then broke into a charge. With no other option, Issler ordered his men to open fire.

The rifle salvo left two people dead and seriously wounded five more. The dead were Albert Buchala, a twenty-nine year old miner born in Habsburg Galicia, and Marie Scholz, a twelve year old student and the daughter of the miner Karl Trojančík. The severely injured were Leopold Jaworski, a fifteen year old miner, Kazimir Petrusiewicz, a thirty-three year old cart hauler, Smoleń Tomas, a forty year old miner, Valentin Czechowicz, a nineteen year old hauler, and Anton Spiszak, a twenty-six year old miner. Following this fatal outburst of violence, the immediate area receded into a shocked calm. One person was arrested for public violence and brought before the district court.⁹⁴⁸

This outbreak of looting and mob violence lasted a little under a week, from the 2nd of July until the 6th. The costs had been tremendous - "property worth more than ten million crowns had been destroyed or stolen, ten people had been shot, thirty-nine had been wounded..."⁹⁴⁹ Over ninety percent of the industrial labor force in Ostravsko had taken part in demonstrations and lootings during those five days. The underlying factors driving such were familiar; war weariness, malnutrition, dissatisfaction with inflation and poor provisioning, anger against profiteers and profiteering, and the increasingly powerful sense of unity and identity on the part of Ostravsko's workers all played an important role.⁹⁵⁰ The Habsburg military restored order only with the assistance of "a small army: one hundred and eighty-four officers, seven thousand one

⁹⁴⁷ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

⁹⁴⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 1046/Jul. 7, 1917/Pr. 1041/48/Unruhen in Oderfurt.

⁹⁴⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 852/Jul. 21, 1917/Pr. 988/1/Mährisch schlesisches Kohlenrevier, militärische Garnison.

⁹⁵⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Oct. 26, 1917/Pr. 1761/238/Arbeiterbewegung im M. -Ostrauer Kohlenreviere.

hundred and thirty-nine infantrymen, two hundred and fifty cavalrymen and twelve machine guns."⁹⁵¹

Concurrently and emerging from the wave of looting additional strikes broke out all across the district, in Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, Hrušová/Hruschau, Zábřeh/Hohenstadt, Michálkovice/Michalkowitz, Radvanice/Radwanitz, Malý Kunčice/Klein Kuntschitz, Fryštát/Freistadt, Orlová/Orlau, Karviná/Karwin, Poruba/Poremba, Paskov/Paskau, Petrvald/Peterswald, Horní Suchá/Ober-Schau, and Rychvald/Reichwaldau.⁹⁵² These spontaneous strike actions involved both industrial workers (most notably at the Vítkovice Steelworks) and coal miners across Ostravsko. These strikes drew on the same complaints as the various incidents of mob violence, but lasted somewhat longer. By the 10th, for example, the miners and cokeworkers at the Johanna shaft in Karviná/Karwin had abandoned their strike and resumed work peacefully. The Sowinetz Gendarme Post, in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, reported that this peaceful work had continued through the 13th, when the report was submitted, and seemed to be stable. The striking workers had reportedly "hoped [for] an appropriate improvement in wages and a sufficient provision of foodstuffs without the continuation of the strike."⁹⁵³ On the 13th, strikes at the Sophia and Alpine shafts involving both miners and cokeworkers came to an end, largely concluding this particular strike wave.

In a wide-ranging discussion among representatives of heavy industry, government officials, and representatives of the organs of state security chaired by Silesian State Councillor von Bobowski, head of state police measures (*Leiter der polizeilichen Massnahmen*), these

⁹⁵¹Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země a velká válka*. 325.

⁹⁵²Josef Kolejka, *Revoluční dělnické hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku, 1917-1921* (Prague: Státní nakladatelství politické literatury, 1957) 53.

⁹⁵³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Jul. 13, 1917/Zl. 509/Bergarbeiterstreik am Johannschachte in Karwin beigelegt.

factors played a significant role. Local administrators pointed out that, in addition to the food question, acquisition of clothing had become a serious problem for Ostravsko's workers. Material for clothing and shoes had become rare and terribly expensive - one meter of decent fabric, which had cost approximately two crowns during peacetime, now went for almost fifty crowns on the black market.⁹⁵⁴

The representatives of the important industrial concerns in Ostravsko were far more concerned about worker organization than they were worker suffering. Their main complaint was that representatives of the workers (they specifically singled out the secretary of the Austrian Metalworkers Union, Andreas Teller) were agitating among the workers - that they "undertake agitating journeys, appear at all possible gatherings, intervene before the Complaint Commission, and intervene harshly against employers...the interference of these worker leaders has repeatedly and severely undermined the authority of the employers."⁹⁵⁵ More to the point, though, they highlighted meetings of the various trade organizations and unions as being centers of political and economic agitation, "in which...war against the propertied is openly prosecuted."⁹⁵⁶

The meeting concluded on several points. First, "that the movement among the workforce is understood as very serious...a very acute social movement is unmistakably to be noted."⁹⁵⁷

Second, that the difficulties of prosecuting perpetrators in the course of the looting had

⁹⁵⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Oct. 26, 1917/Pr. 1761/238/Arbeiterbewegung im M. -Ostrauer Kohlenreviere.

⁹⁵⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Oct. 26, 1917/Pr. 1761/238/Arbeiterbewegung im M. -Ostrauer Kohlenreviere.

⁹⁵⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Oct. 26, 1917/Pr. 1761/238/Arbeiterbewegung im M. -Ostrauer Kohlenreviere.

⁹⁵⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Oct. 26, 1917/Pr. 1761/238/Arbeiterbewegung im M. -Ostrauer Kohlenreviere.

engendered a certain feeling of immunity among elements of the workforce, and such clemency was to be avoided at all costs in the future. And third, that more attention and energy needed to be directed towards monitoring worker gatherings and suppressing the use of these as opportunities for provoking the workforce.⁹⁵⁸

Reaction

The July events marked a significant and worrying escalation of public violence in Ostravsko, an escalation that compelled a response from state authorities. As one consequence of the lootings, infantrymen from the Imperial-Royal army company designated as *Assistenz* were stationed on a permanent basis at locations retailing food supplies. Butcher shops, bakeries, and municipal food stores were of especial concern.⁹⁵⁹ Two additional companies of infantry from the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Infantry Regiment Nr. 20 were stationed in Karviná/Karwin.⁹⁶⁰ Colonel Jahoda, head of State Gendarmerie Command Nr. 10, issued orders that Gendarmerie reinforcements from outside of the district be assigned in cooperation with the local Gendarmerie commands rather than centrally by the Police Commissariat, as during the unrest "the deployed men departed without the necessary documents...in no way were [matters] prepared for them...no one knew where the individual persons had been distributed."⁹⁶¹

On the 10th of July, 1917, State Councillor Josef Ritter von Bobowski issued a notice to the District Commissioners of Eastern Silesia and Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, as well as to the Gendarmerie Commands in Polish and Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau. In order to "secure the coal

⁹⁵⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Oct. 26, 1917/Pr. 1761/238/Arbeiterbewegung im M. -Ostrauer Kohlenreviere.

⁹⁵⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Apr. 10, 1918/Zl. 484/151/Seit dem Unruhen im Monate Juli 1917...

⁹⁶⁰ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Oct. 17, 1918/Pr. 716/150/Auskunft zur Anfrage.

⁹⁶¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Nov. 5, 1917/Zl. 309resad/Mähr. schles. Kohlenrevier; Verstärkung der Sicherheitsvorkehrungen.

area...military measures were undertaken which entered into effect on the 8th of July, 1917.⁹⁶² The measures referenced were the division of the industrial district into 11 groups, each of which were subordinated to a Group Commandant (*Gruppenkommandant*). These Group Commands were headquartered in Vítkovice/Witkowitz, Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, Mariánské Hory/Marienberg, Přívoz/Oderfurt, Svinov/Schönbrunn, Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, Hrušovice/Hruschau, the Albrecht shaft in Petřvald/Peterswald, Orlová/Orlau, Karviná/Karwin, and Fryštát/Freistadt. The political offices in the district were now to apply to their local Group Commandant for armed support for the maintenance of order rather than to the State government in Opava/Troppau, bringing military forces and commanders closer to the individual communities experiencing episodes of unrest. Finally, as a guiding principle striking areas (*Streikgebiet*) were to be immediately occupied by military cordons.⁹⁶³

Finally, on the 21st, Silesian State President Widmann submitted a memorandum to the Minister of the Interior in response to the July strikes in Ostravsko. He had already begun to demand the continuation of military force in the area. For Widmann, the July days "again demonstrated that the maintenance of a standing military garrison in the coal district is a dictate of absolute necessity."⁹⁶⁴

Hamsterei

The full costs of the spasm of looting and mob violence in July of 1917 were very high. The episode, however, also offered a very revealing look into the weaknesses of Habsburg food distribution. Following the end of the violence, the various merchants affected in Ostravsko

⁹⁶²ZAOPŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Jul. 10, 1917/Pr. 1116/55/Der Leiter der Polizeilichen Massnahmen Landesregierungsrat Bobowski.

⁹⁶³ZAOPŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/Jul. 10, 1917/Pr. 1116/55/Der Leiter der Polizeilichen Massnahmen Landesregierungsrat Bobowski.

⁹⁶⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 178/Sig. 852/Jul. 21, 1917/Pr. 988/1/Mährisch schlesisches Kohlenrevier, militärische Garnison.

submitted in essence insurance claims for compensation for their losses to the Ministry of Justice. These claims collectively totalled approximately ten million crowns, with merchants in Orlová/Orlau alone claiming over two million crowns worth of damages. These figures were almost unbelievable, and the state administration in Těšín/Teschen concluded that "in this era such great reserves could only have been held back for profiteering and consumption on the black market."⁹⁶⁵ One investigator's report ought be quoted at length:

It is an understood fact, that many merchants held hidden great reserves of more than the typical quantity of exactly those goods which are most rare, which have long since disappeared from legitimate markets or even been requisitioned for the sole use of military or state aims, self-evidently for purposes of profiteering. For two years there has been no rice, emulsion soap, oil, no lentils or beans, for many years no cornmeal and no flour, no coffee and no cocoa, for many weeks also no sugar to be had. During the looting have, however, unbelievable quantities of wheat flour of the best quality, cornmeal, rice, green coffee beans, beans, sugar in old packaging, plant fat [*Kunero!*] and oil, emulsion soap, tobacco, and so on have come to light.⁹⁶⁶

Gendarmes, soldiers and officers, administrators, and others all testified as to the appearance of such goods in large quantities during lootings, which fact itself testified to the prevalence of widespread and significant hoarding (*Hamsterei*) of goods among the merchants of Ostravsko. One claim, submitted by a merchant in Orlová/Orlau named Emil Altmann, listed ten thousand kilograms of sugar as having been lost. Altmann was not and never had been a wholesaler, and had recently received a shipment of fifteen hundred kilograms of sugar from municipal stores for sale to the community. His customers, however, testified that they "could for a considerable time acquire absolutely no sugar from him."⁹⁶⁷ Reports from the investigation held that a crowd of around two thousand people dedicated three full days to looting Altmann's stores before being halted by military intervention, finding enormous quantities of sugar, flour, coffee,

⁹⁶⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Aug. 20, 1917/Zl. 4862/17/Zufolge Erlasses des k.k. Justizministeriums vom...

⁹⁶⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Aug. 20, 1917/Zl. 4862/17/Zufolge Erlasses des k.k. Justizministeriums vom...

⁹⁶⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Aug. 20, 1917/Zl. 4862/17/Zufolge Erlasses des k.k. Justizministeriums vom...

chicory, emulsion soap, tobacco, and other rare or unavailable goods without either reaching the floor or opening Altmann's ice cellars at all.⁹⁶⁸

Altmann was not the only one. Another merchant in Orlová/Orlau, Elias Barber, submitted a claim for three cart loads of high-quality leather, though two days earlier customers fruitlessly inquired after leather. Looters further uncovered considerable quantities of foodstuffs, including six hundred kilograms of rice, which he had similarly neither acknowledged or sold to the public. The Königstein bakery there, run by the baker Perl, was accused of trading bread for agricultural products under the table - the flour for the bread baked there was acquired from municipal stores and was intended to provide bread for the entire population. "Instead of bread the miners' wives received only curses..." and the quantity of bread ration cards received (in exchange for bread legitimately sold) was significantly under the quantities which ought to have been baked and distributed.⁹⁶⁹

The publican Goldmann in Orlová/Orlau submitted a claim for forty thousand crowns worth of liquor. Altmann's purported vinegar reserves were drained, revealing stores of liquor, spirits, petroleum, and benzine. The merchant Grünbaum in Louky/Lonkau lost three cases of emulsion soap along with tobacco, rice, bacon, and petroleum. The merchant Schein in Fryštát/Freistadt lost two sacks of wheat flour and three of coffee, while the merchant Ebel in Louky/Lonkau started selling quality rice in a panic for forty hellers a kilo after the plunderings began, and is reported to have shipped a number of cases of rice to Hungary. Even merchants whose trade had nothing to do with food had hamstered away significant amounts of

⁹⁶⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Aug. 20, 1917/Zl. 4862/17/Zufolge Erlasses des k.k. Justizministeriums vom...

⁹⁶⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Aug. 20, 1917/Zl. 4862/17/Zufolge Erlasses des k.k. Justizministeriums vom...

foodstuffs.⁹⁷⁰

As the evidence gathered against profiteering merchants came largely from citizens engaging in illegal acts prosecutions were difficult. Nonetheless Emil Altmann and Elias Barber faced charges. The baker, Perl, had indeed been selling bread to residents of neighboring municipalities and his unpleasant character was firmly demonstrated, but insufficient evidence of malfeasance was found to prosecute for black market activity. The painstakingly detailed Police Commissariat report on the matter gathered a wide range of indicative evidence against numerous additional merchants, but as much of it remained only suggestive, few prosecutions actually emerged.⁹⁷¹

⁹⁷⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Aug. 20, 1917/Zl. 4862/17/Zufolge Erlasses des k.k. Justizministeriums vom...

⁹⁷¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 180/Sig. 1542/Nov. 24, 1917/Pr. 1542/192/Juli-Unruhen; Erhebungen.

Zmobilisujme proletariát pro mír!

The relative quiet following the July crisis was widely perceived as the calm before a storm. In a report on the 18th of October, General von Naumann observed that "in the Ostrava-Karviná industrial area peace reigns, and all operations are working as normal...there are therefore, however, no fewer signs available, which make the outbreak of a worker movement not improbable."⁹⁷² The general woes bedeviling the area had worsened rather than abated, and the arrival of winter further reduced opportunities to acquire food under the table.

Autumn 1917, though, also marked an important shift in Ostravsko protests which came fully to fruition in January and February of 1918. Though demonstrating for peace was hardly a new idea during the war, mass protests over the bulk of the war had emerged from unsatisfactory local conditions. Lack of food supplies, introduction of rationing or reduction of quantities rationed, low wages, or personality conflicts drove strikes, demonstrations, and protests. The recalling of the *Reichsrat* and the loosening of restrictions on gatherings in conjunction with loosening censorship in line with Karl's new program connected these protests with larger issues, simplified the logistics of protest, enabled rapid dissemination of information, and assisted in providing a common vocabulary of protest.

Reports of the October Revolution in Russia first reached the general public in Ostravsko on the 10th of November, though at minimum Social Democratic leaders had been closely following reports of Bolshevik maneuvering ever since the establishment of Kerensky's government.⁹⁷³ The impact of Lenin's triumph in Ostravsko was largely not immediate - much like the February Revolution, the news affected the boundaries and implications of political

⁹⁷²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Oct. 18, 1917/Zl. 21218/M.I./Stellvertreter des Mil. Komdt. Krakau für das mähr. schles.galiz. Kohlenrevier in Mährisch Ostrau.

⁹⁷³Josef Kolejka, "Třídní boje na Ostravsku v letech 1917-1921." in: Andělín Grobelný, Bohumil Sobotík, eds. *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku. Sborník prací.* (Ostrava: Krajský národní výbor v Ostravě, 1957) 288.

engagement but did not immediately impact the modes or intensity of protests.

A survey of incidents of unrest in Ostravsko in the following months offers evidence for this proposition. On the 5th of October, the afternoon shift at the Heinrich mine refused to work, citing food shortages. This instance of insubordination, as von Naumann characterized it, was put down by "the intervention of military force...on the morning of the 6th entry resumed as normal."⁹⁷⁴ On the 7th, a fire broke out at the mineral oil plant in Bohumín/Oderberg, and the paraffin manufactory there burned to the ground. At least three months of production were lost, and arson was considered likely to have been the cause. On the 12th, clemency for two workers from the New Steelworks was denied, leading to scattered disturbances and refusals to begin work. *Pace* von Naumann, "also here was order only restored through the intervention of battalion command."⁹⁷⁵

Three further incidents were resolved through the intervention of armed violence. Again on the 12th, approximately fifty female workers at the Vítkovice steel casting plant put down their tools and demanded increased wages and better labor protections, while on the 13th some three hundred workers at the Vítkovice Pipeworks demonstrated, demanding advances on their wages and an earlier payday. In both cases work resumed following the intervention of military forces. Another incident on the 16th involved over twelve hundred workers at the railroad workshops in Přívoz/Oderfurt, who refused to begin their morning shift at 7:30 AM. They submitted demands for provisioning of clothing and higher wages, but military intervention ended the strike slightly before noon.⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Oct. 18, 1917/Zl. 21218/M.I./Stellvertreter des Mil. Komdt. Krakau für das mähr. schles.galiz. Kohlenrevier in Maehrisch Ostrau.

⁹⁷⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Oct. 18, 1917/Zl. 21218/M.I./Stellvertreter des Mil. Komdt. Krakau für das mähr. schles.galiz. Kohlenrevier in Maehrisch Ostrau.

⁹⁷⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 184/Sig. 241/Oct. 18, 1917/Zl. 21218/M.I./Stellvertreter des Mil. Komdt. Krakau für das mähr. schles.galiz. Kohlenrevier in Maehrisch Ostrau.

Two major hunger demonstrations took place in October 1917. On the 22nd of October, some six hundred women gathered in Vítkovice/Witkowitz to demand old stores of sugar, soap, and twine (*Zwirn*) from the shopkeepers there, which rumor held they were hoarding. Luckily for all involved, the scene did not devolve into looting and violence, and Gendarme and Municipal Watch detachments persuaded the crowd to disperse.⁹⁷⁷ On the 30th, some five hundred women gathered in Poruba/Poremba to demonstrate against reductions in the sugar quota.⁹⁷⁸

November swept in bleak, cold, and sugarless. On the 1st, two hundred women protested the Heinrich mine in Karviná/Karwin for refusing to honor their sugar ration coupons as well as bean shortages. On the afternoon of the 2nd, a hundred workers' wives demonstrated at the Albrecht mine in Petřvald/Peterswald due to fat, sugar, and potato shortages, while one hundred and fifty women protested at the Michael shaft in Michalkovice/Michalkowitz due to reductions in sugar rations. Sugar shortages prompted a gathering of over six hundred women in the market hall (*Warenhalle*) in Vítkovice/Witkowitz on the 10th and some two hundred workers' wives at the Přívoz/Oderfurt City Hall on the 12th. Over three hundred women and children participated in street demonstrations at the District Commissioner's office in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau on the 19th due to sugar shortages, while a simultaneous demonstration composed of workers and bourgeois women took place before the Přívoz/Oderfurt City Hall against sugar, milk, and fat shortages. On the 21st, over a hundred miners' wives assembled at the New mine (*Neuschacht*) in Lazy/Lazy to protest sugar and fat shortages.⁹⁷⁹

⁹⁷⁷ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Nov. 1, 1917/Pr. 504/12/Monatsbericht - October. It is an open question to what extent the crowd believed official denials of secret reserves.

⁹⁷⁸ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Nov. 1, 1917/Pr. 504/12/Monatsbericht - October.

⁹⁷⁹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Dec. 3, 1917/Pr. 504/12/Monatsbericht - November.

Epiphany: For Bread and Peace

On January 6th, a meeting under the auspices of the *Český svaz* took place in Prague which resulted in the Epiphany Declaration, calling for Czecho-Slovak independence.⁹⁸⁰ On the 14th of January the flour ration for Cisleithanian industrial workers was once again lowered, from 200 grams a day to 165. The confluence of these two events in Ostravsko led to a short and sharply-disciplined general strike in support of bread, peace, and, on behalf of some of the participants, national independence.

The news of the flour ration cut led almost immediately to demonstrations in the industrial centers of Vienna and Lower Austria. Gunther Rothenberg argues that " This was the last straw...despite pleas for moderation from the Austrian Social-Democratic leadership, a strike broke out in Wiener-Neustadt, rapidly spreading to other Austrian industrial areas and to Hungary," following which the workers movement launched an enormous strike movement across both halves of the Monarchy.⁹⁸¹ A number of factories even elected Soviets.⁹⁸² In Bohemia, this movement expressed itself largely as a Czech-nationalist wave rather than a protest of wartime privation, and thus Czech Social Democratic leaders in cooperation with the Czech National Socialists called a one-day general strike in Prague for January 22nd, in which approximately one hundred and twenty-two thousand workers participated.⁹⁸³

In Ostravsko, January was a brutal month, and incidents caused by food shortages

⁹⁸⁰Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, *Vznik Československa, 1918. Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky* (Prague: AFGH NADAS s.r.o. Vrútky, 1994) 36-37.

⁹⁸¹Gunther Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*. 211.

⁹⁸²Rees, *The Czechs During World War I*. 85-86; "Die Nahrungsfrage und die Arbeiterbewegung," *Neue Freie Presse*, Jan. 17th, 1918. Morgenblatt. 1.

⁹⁸³Rees, *The Czechs During World War I*. 89.

occurred on a weekly or even daily basis.⁹⁸⁴ The Petrvald/Peterswald Gendarme station reported on the 18th that should the food situation not improve quickly the reduction in flour rations would certainly and very quickly lead to a general strike.⁹⁸⁵ Not only the civilian workers but also the soldiers in the district were deeply unhappy. A Gendarme report from Polish Ostrava/Ostrau quoted an unidentified soldier: "...if it should come to a head again, the soldiers will go with the workers!"⁹⁸⁶

Though scattered disturbances were a regular occurrence by this point, larger strikes began as predicted on the 18th, with over a thousand miners taking part in walkouts and delays at three shafts in Karviná/Karwin.⁹⁸⁷ The next day the Gabriel shaft shut down completely - the entire workforce appeared and asked after the availability of flour; after being told none was available, only forty-five of five hundred and eighty-four workers stayed for their shift.⁹⁸⁸ The Austria shaft also began experiencing walkouts, and by the 20th the mine administration had begun trying to bribe their workers with the promise of meat in exchange for continuing to work.⁹⁸⁹

Under increasing pressure from the spread of these spontaneous walkouts, the Social

⁹⁸⁴Cf. ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Jan. 9, 1918/Zl. 90/Arbeiterunzufriedenheit infolge Mangel an Lebensmittel; ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Jan. 10, 1918/Zl. 81/Arbeitseinstellung in der Drahtseilfabrik in Hrabuwka b/W; ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Jan. 14, 1918/Zl. 62/Unzufriedenheit der Arbeiten in Karwin.

⁹⁸⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/93/Jan. 18, 1918/Zl. 73/Sicherheitsverhältnisse im Postenrayone. Posted in Petrvald as Assistenz was one machine gun platoon, one platoon of hussars, and a company of infantry.

⁹⁸⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Jan. 16, 1918/Zl. 44/Arbeiterbewegung am Austriaschachte in Karwin.

⁹⁸⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/93/Jan. 19, 1918/Amtsnotiz. The Hohenegger, Gabriel, and Franziska shafts.

⁹⁸⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/93/Jan. 19, 1918/Amtsnotiz.

⁹⁸⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/93/Jan. 20, 1918/Zl. 55/Streik teilweiser, am Austriaschachte in Karwin.

Democratic leadership in Ostravsko as in Vienna moved to channel and ultimately dam worker dissatisfaction.⁹⁹⁰ On the morning of Monday the 21st, the Police Commissariat received an exemplar of a flyer circulating in the Vítkovice Steelworks, which read: "Comrades male and female! We unite with our striking comrades and protest publicly. At eleven let everything come to a halt. Meeting at three at the Worker's and the Czech Houses."⁹⁹¹ The walkout, though not concluded punctually at eleven, nevertheless shut down all Vítkovice operations by that afternoon, and the announced meeting was attended by some eight thousand people.⁹⁹² Military forces stood at alert should the workers move to attack or loot warehouses or private businesses.⁹⁹³ At the workers' meeting leaders of the German, Czech, and Polish workers' movements addressed the crowd regarding the strike movement in Vienna and Lower Austria, and the state of affairs in Ostravsko.⁹⁹⁴ However, A Czech-national speaker further demanded Czecho-Slovak independence, and Polish speakers called for freedom for Poland.⁹⁹⁵ The gathering concluded on a resolution expressing sympathy with the Austrian strike movement and decided on a forty-eight-hour solidarity strike, which is to say to resume work the afternoon of the 23rd. Another workers' meeting, the largest wartime gathering to receive an assembly permit

⁹⁹⁰Cf. Otáhal, *Dělnické hnutí na Ostravsku*, 67. Social Democratic party leaders in general and Prokeš, Cingr, and Reger in particular were strongly opposed to wildcat strikes and thought wartime strikes in general to be dangerous and counterproductive. Their entire wartime program rested on the basis of cooperation with the authorities.

⁹⁹¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Jan. 21, 1918/Pr. 136/21/Amtsnotiz. *Soudruzi a Soudružki! Spojme se s naším stavkující kamarady a protestujeme veřejně. V 11 necht' všechno vstoupí do klidu. Schuze ve 3 v delnickym a Českym dome*. Errors in original.

⁹⁹²AMO/GO4/57/1677/Ostrauer Zeitung/"Die Ausstandbewegung im Ostrau-Karwiner Revier." Jan. 22nd, 1918. Abend-Ausgabe. 1.

⁹⁹³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Jan. 21, 1918/Zl. 156/Telephonisch. Ober-Postdirektor Troppau; Cf. ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 179/Sig. 1116/93/Jan. 17, 1918/Zl. 3res/Plünderung.

⁹⁹⁴For more details see AMO/ND9/16/136/Na zdar/"Manifestace vítkovického dělnictva pro mir, chléb a seburčení národů." Jan. 25th, 1918. 1.

⁹⁹⁵The Czech speaker was Bohumil Šída, the Polish one Comrade Secretary Teller. AMO/ND9/16/136/Na zdar/"Manifestace vítkovického dělnictva pro mir, chléb a seburčení národů." Jan. 25th, 1918. 1.

to date, was to be held the next day.⁹⁹⁶ Following the meeting twenty-nine mining operations had been emptied of workers, and a series of industrial concerns in the area had also been shut down by strikes.⁹⁹⁷

The collected Social Democratic party executives for Ostravsko released a declaration the next day (the 22nd) laying out the workers' demands. They sought "a general peace without annexations and reparations, equal provisioning of all strata and classes of the population with food and other necessary goods, for political and national freedom and for the abolition of militarization."⁹⁹⁸ In short, peace, freedom, and bread. The party executives also emphasized the importance of discipline, order, and the resumption of work on the 23rd despite lack of progress on these demands.⁹⁹⁹

On the morning of the 23rd, an immense meeting (of some twenty thousand attendees¹⁰⁰⁰) took place under the auspices of the Social Democratic *Reichsrat* Representatives Prokeš, Cingr, and Reger in order to officially adopt the demands released the previous day, which duly occurred, as well as to emphasize the necessity of resuming work at the previously announced

⁹⁹⁶AMO/GO4/57/1677/Ostrauer Zeitung/"Die Ausstandbewegung im Ostrau-Karwiner Revier." Jan. 22nd, 1918. Abend-Ausgabe. 1.

⁹⁹⁷AMO/GO4/57/1677/Ostrauer Zeitung/"Die Ausstandbewegung im Ostrau-Karwiner Revier." Jan. 22nd, 1918. Abend-Ausgabe. 1. Affected were the Přívoz/Oderfurt Ironworks, the Elbertzhagen and Glassner Machine Tools Works, the Mannesmann Pipe Works in Svinov/Schönbrunn, and the Northern Railway Machine Shop in Přívoz.

⁹⁹⁸AMO/GO4/57/1677/Ostrauer Zeitung/"Ein Aufruf an die Arbeiterschaft." Jan. 22nd, 1918. Abend-Ausgabe. 1. The demands also involved the participation of workers' representatives in peace negotiations and the democratization of state and local elections through introduction of a universal equal direct and secret ballot, including for women.

⁹⁹⁹The central government in Vienna's promises in response to the Viennese and Lower Austrian strike movements were characterized as reliable and satisfactory, perhaps in order to square this circle.

¹⁰⁰⁰AMO/NN10/9a/632/Na zdar/"Mírové hnutí rakouského proletariátu." Jan. 30th, 1918. 1; AMO/ND9/16/136/Na zdar/"Stávka ostravsko-karvinských horníků pro mír a chléb." Jan. 25th, 1918. 1. Another 15,000-20,000 reportedly attended a similar meeting in Orlová/Orlau that afternoon. Sources differ on the second figure.

deadline.¹⁰⁰¹ The speakers emphasized the *political* character of the strike. Cingr denied that the strike had any economic character at all, and Reger and Prokeš additionally called for Polish and Czecho-Slovak independence (respectively).¹⁰⁰² One speaker is further reported as saluting the "...heroic achievements of the Russian Revolution as a powerful example of the new era of social and national freedom."¹⁰⁰³ Regardless of the Social-Democratic repudiation of economic concerns, much of the animating energy of protests and demonstrations, including the Epiphany strikes, clearly stemmed from widespread deprivation.

The continued broad-based pressure from the workforce testified to the relevance of continuing deprivation as a political issue. A significant number of the workers present wanted to continue the strike, and indeed several Socialist organs quite sharply and publicly criticized the Social Democratic leadership over their quick conclusion of the strike effort.¹⁰⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the general strike ended on schedule, with virtually all of the striking workers returning to their scheduled shifts on the 23rd.¹⁰⁰⁵ Scattered independent strike actions continued, but nothing substantial.

Much had changed since the previous summer, let alone since 1916. Rather than the military crushing this general strike, they were nowhere to be seen - held ready in their garrisons but never deployed. The military dictatorship that gripped the Monarchy had been shattered by

¹⁰⁰¹AMO/GO4/57/1677/Ostrauer Zeitung/"Die Ausstandbewegung im Revier." Jan. 23rd, 1918. Abend-Ausgabe. 1.

¹⁰⁰²AMO/ND9/16/136/Na zdar/"Stávka ostravsko-karvinských horníků pro mir a chléb." Jan. 25th, 1918. 1-2.

¹⁰⁰³Cited in Otáhal, 66. The citation as given is, however, inaccurate. I have as of yet been unable to track down the actual source. ...*hrdinný čin ruské revoluce jako mocný příklad nové doby sociální a národnostní svobody*.

¹⁰⁰⁴For worker dissatisfaction, see: SÜA, MVP/R 1908-1918, 276A, číslo 7018 XV b/18; SÜA, MVP/R 1908-1918, 276A, číslo 7998 XV b/18, cited in: Otáhal, 68. For criticism of ending the strike, see: AMO/NN10/9a/ 632/Na zdar/"K posledním událostem v revíru ostravsko-karvinském." Feb. 13th, 1918. 1, Dělnický deník, Feb. 10th, 1918, cited in Otáhal, 69.

¹⁰⁰⁵AMO/GO4/57/1677/Ostrauer Zeitung/19A/"Die Streikbewegung beendet." Jan. 24, 1918. Abend-Ausgabe. 2.

Stürghk's assassination, Franz Josef's death, and the resumption of parliamentary governance with the reopening of the *Reichsrat*. The balance of power between the labor force and the state in Ostravsko had in fact clearly tilted in quite the other direction. Employers sought to bribe striking workers to remain on the job rather than calling the Gendarmes. Wage increases and inflation bonuses were so routinely granted that the topic was never even mentioned during this strike. In fact, soon enough striking workers would continue to receive wages.

More, the kinds of declarations that earned hefty prison terms or the death sentence earlier in the war were bellowed from lecterns and cheered by thousands in the streets and meeting houses of the district. Mass demonstrations for a status quo ante peace, for class equality, for democratization, and most obviously for secession from the Monarchy and the construction of independent nation-states had become perfectly legitimate and accepted activities. The course of the January general strike in Ostravsko highlights the collapse of the coercive potential of the Habsburg state and a shift towards civil society as the dynamic actor in the last year of the war.

Finis Austriae: Spring, Summer, and Fall of 1918

Spring in the Monarchy was marked by ominous indicators of oncoming ruin. Starvation stalked the Monarchy. Though high hopes had been vested in Ukrainian grain delivered under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, signed on the 3rd of March, the results thereof were negligible. Food requisitions were finally inaugurated in the Hungarian half of the Monarchy in March 1918.¹⁰⁰⁶ In late April, the head of the Joint Food Committee, General Landwehr, was so desperate that, "acting on his own authority, [he] confiscated a fleet of Danube supply transports steaming to Germany and had their contents diverted to Vienna. The German High Command was infuriated...[Foreign Minister Count] Burian had to promise the German economic organizations far-reaching control rights in the Monarchy..."¹⁰⁰⁷ This counsel of desperation was only briefly helpful, however. As Arthur May points out, "Late in the spring of 1918 the bread ration for Vienna was again cut down; the daily food allowance included three ounces of flour, an ounce of meat, a quarter ounce of fat, two and a half ounces of potatoes, three-quarters of an ounce of jam, and...worse was yet to come."¹⁰⁰⁸ The insufficiency of Ukrainian supplies for resolving starvation conditions on the Monarchy may be demonstrated by an example from the 6th of August, 1918. The district Agricultural Office submitted a note to the Police Commissariat reporting the arrival of the area's share of Ukrainian foodstuffs for dispersal to the population. In total, there were sixteen cartons of seven kilograms each: six cartons of flour, four cartons of barley, three cartons of pea flour, and three cartons of bacon, one hundred and twelve kilograms of foodstuffs in all, to be shared among one hundred and twenty thousand people.¹⁰⁰⁹

¹⁰⁰⁶Gary Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy*. 197; Z.A.B. Zeman, *The Breakup of the Habsburg Empire, 1914-1918*. 141.

¹⁰⁰⁷Gary Shanafelt, *The Secret Enemy*. 197.

¹⁰⁰⁸Arthur May, *The Passing of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914-1918*. 669.

¹⁰⁰⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 869/Aug. 6, 1918/Zl. a-2117/7/Lebensmittel aus Ukraine.

State authorities belatedly attempted to present a positive appeal for the loyalty of the Habsburg population in May, mirroring similar moves towards "patriotic instruction" (*Vaterlandische Unterricht*) in the Army. The War Ministry released several orders, on the 15th of March, the 12th of April, and the 28th of April, regarding the use of trustworthy persons and the development of written materials for such purposes. The Moravian administration in response released an order to the police and administration officials under its purview on the 3rd of May to adapt and distribute the attached pamphlet to the civilian population.¹⁰¹⁰

The pamphlet itself was addressed to the workers and offered a mix of optimism, conciliation, fear, and appeals to duty. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk offered hope that "this terrible war forced upon us, which through four years of war has immersed all of Europe in blood and laid endless suffering on the entire population, soon will come to an end."¹⁰¹¹ Standing in the way of peace were "rapacious Italy" and "the ruling statesmen of England, France, and the United States," as well as a "new dangerous, treacherous foe" who "threatens with fresh forces: Japan..."¹⁰¹² The complaints of the workers, it conceded, were fully understandable: "each class has its concerns and the workers as well should protect and represent their interests, and your [Eure] justified wage demands will certainly be approved."¹⁰¹³

Agitators and organizers, however, were not to be trusted: "there are many among us, who do not contemplate that they are with us all sons of one homeland, that the same danger

¹⁰¹⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/Zl. 8077/Belehrendes Einwirken auf die Arbeiterschaft durch Flugschriften.

¹⁰¹¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen!

¹⁰¹²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen!

¹⁰¹³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen!

threatens us all..."¹⁰¹⁴ Abandonment of the militarized workers' sworn oaths "can lead to incalculable consequences...But who will feel the consequences the most? Not those few among us who with all their might and many words incite us, as they are always the slickest to disappear in the presence of danger and abandon their own comrades."¹⁰¹⁵ The pamphlet continued with a direct attack on the methods and ends of the worker movement. "Ask yourself, who benefits, if you break your oath? Do you believe that we will sooner receive the food which the state procures for the workers with all arduousness and especial consideration? No, the disorder will make it impossible! Do you believe that someone will be able to pay you wages? Do you believe that someone will be there, who protects your wives and children from acts of violence? No, because state order and security will disappear! Do you believe that you will reach a general peace earlier? No, as our enemies will exploit the circumstance to dismember us, and therein are they entirely as one, from the workers to the prime minister."¹⁰¹⁶

Moving beyond undercutting the immediate aims of worker radicalism, the pamphlet took aim at Bolshevism and the inspiration offered by the Soviet model: "Have you read how events are going in Russia? Prosperity has been annihilated, trade destroyed, the factories collapsed into ruin, and among this who suffers most; the decent workers, whose children and wives starve and despair, and are abandoned to plundering bands, and must bend to the yoke of various violent men. It would be a disaster, a disgrace, a humiliation for us all, that no one among you would wish to experience."¹⁰¹⁷

¹⁰¹⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen! Emphasis in original.

¹⁰¹⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen! Emphasis in original.

¹⁰¹⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen! Emphasis in original.

¹⁰¹⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und

Finally, the pamphlet aimed to mobilize hostility against the Entente and loyalty towards the armed forces to inspire obedience and productivity among the workforce: "who would delight the most in such a thing? The Entente. Who laughed themselves sick during the previous strike? The Entente...Workers! Do you truly wish to take care of the business of the Entente?...Do we not have the great example before our eyes, that our soldiers have given us? And is it not your responsibility and obligation to provide to our soldiers the means for their defense? Are we permitted to leave our countrymen and brothers weaponless?"¹⁰¹⁸ The various Military Commandants were to ensure that these were distributed to their subordinates.¹⁰¹⁹

Despite the earnestness and scope of such appeals, there is no evidence that they changed anyone's minds. Protests in Ostravsko in May continued to occur almost daily. On the 2nd, a gathering of two hundred workers' wives gathered by the Northern Rail's Michael mine in Michalkovice/Michalkowitz to protest against reductions in bread rations. The same day, one hundred and twenty women demonstrated at the District Economics Office (*Wirtschaftsamt*) due to flour shortages. The next day, three protests against flour and bread shortages took place - three hundred miners demonstrated at the Northern Rail's Josef mine in Michalkovice/Michalkowitz, four hundred miners by the management office of the Northern Rail's Michael mine (also in Michalkovice/Michalkowitz), and two hundred workers' wives at the District Economics Office in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau. On the 4th, some eight hundred workers' wives and adolescents protested reductions in flour and bread rations at the Michael mine. On the 6th, seven hundred rail workers demonstrated against food shortages at the Northern

Arbeiterinnen! Emphasis in original.

¹⁰¹⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 3, 1918/z. Zl. 8540/M.I. ex 1918/Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen! Emphasis in original. I have compressed the phrase "*Arbeiter und Arbeiterinnen!*" into simply "Workers!" for want of a better way to emphasize the gendered inclusiveness deployed.

¹⁰¹⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 764/May 19, 1918/Belehrendes Einwirken auf die Arbeiterschaft durch Flugschriften.

Rail Inspectorate offices in Přívoz/Oderfurt. On the 8th, the Municipal Offices in Zabřeh/Hohenstadt was the site of a demonstration against reductions in the flour ration by some two hundred workers' wives.¹⁰²⁰

The following day, two hundred miners' wives sought to prevent the beginning of work for the afternoon shift at the Northern Rail's Franz mine in Přívoz/Oderfurt in protest against flour shortages. That same day (the 9th), two hundred and fifty workers' wives demonstrated at the District Economics Office against flour shortages. On the 10th, two hundred women from Polish Ostrava/Ostrau demonstrated at the District Economics Office due to flour shortages, while two hundred and fifty railworkers' wives demonstrated at the Přívoz/Oderfurt City Hall. Another hundred women and children gathered at the District Commissioner's office, as government officials had confiscated potatoes they had purchased themselves from Silesian farmers upon arrival at the Svinov/Schönbrunn rail station. Finally, several hundred women protested at the Municipal Offices in Malý Kunčice/Klein Kuntschitz due to potato shortages, as a result of which three women received administrative sentences for threatening violence.¹⁰²¹

On the 11th, eight hundred women and children attempted to march to the District Economics Office for another food protest but were turned away at the city border by Gendarme and military units. On the afternoon of the 13th some five thousand women demonstrated in front of the District Economics Office in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, again due to provisioning stoppages. Four hundred women demonstrated there on the 14th for similar reasons, while two different protests took place at the District Commissioner's office. The first involved thirty-five women protesting milk provisions, and the second involved around one hundred and fifty women and children due to milk, flour, and potato shortages. A small demonstration of about twenty-five

¹⁰²⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/May, 1918/Monatsbericht.

¹⁰²¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/May, 1918/Monatsbericht.

women finally took place on the 23rd. These women had simply reached their limit for being bounced between the mine and the municipality, both of which assured them that the other was actually responsible for providing their food.¹⁰²² Strikes and strikers increasingly undertook new tactics in response to the terror tactics increasingly being used by the Army; during organized strikes, striking workers would simply stay home. This announced "that the worker parties have developed a new tactic of peaceful refusal to work for future strikes, in order to in this manner meet sharper government measures."¹⁰²³

June was less stormy, but by no means calm. On the 5th of June, around two hundred miners' wives demonstrated by the Northern Rail's Hermensgild mine in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau due to the low quality of the flour provided to them. On the 17th, "many hundreds" of miners' wives demonstrated in the same area against reductions in their flour quota.¹⁰²⁴ That same day, some five hundred women similarly protested against the reduction in flour rations at the Poruba/Porembe City Hall. On the 27th and the 28th, demonstrations at the Hermensgild against potato shortages and the provision of poor-quality flour took an "alarming" character and resulted in six arrests.¹⁰²⁵

Multiple public demonstrations and protests continued in July. Two demonstrations took place on the 8th, in Poruba/Porembe and Vítkovice/Witkowitz. In Poruba/Porembe, around one hundred miners' wives demonstrated by the Sophia mine due to food shortages. In Vítkovice/Witkowitz, a similar number of workers' wives demonstrated in front of the

¹⁰²²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/May, 1918/Monatsbericht.

¹⁰²³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/May 18, 1918/Zl. 3456/Neue Taktik der Arbeiter bei Ausständen.

¹⁰²⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Jul. 1, 1918/Pr. 504/19/Monatsbericht.

¹⁰²⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Jul. 1, 1918/Pr. 504/19/Monatsbericht.

Steelworks Directorate's offices, again due to food shortages.¹⁰²⁶ On the 9th, about a hundred more women demonstrated before the Alpine shaft in Poruba/Porembo due to potato and flour shortages. On the 11th, 12th, and 13th of July repeated "alarming" demonstrations of workers' wives before the Vítkovice/Witkowitz City Hall and the offices of the Steelworks Directorate, again due to provisioning problems.¹⁰²⁷ Some eight hundred workers' wives congregated by the Vítkovice/Witkowitz City Hall on the 15th and again on the 18th to protest flour and potato shortages, while a crowd of around five hundred workers' wives demonstrated on the 22nd against both the quantity and the quality of provisions provided. Smaller demonstrations occurred on the 29th and 31st.¹⁰²⁸

Centrifugal national agitation gained ground rapidly in the summer heat. On the 29th of May the United States issued a declaration of "sympathy for the nationalistic aspirations of the Czecho-Slovaks and Yugoslavs."¹⁰²⁹ Two days later, representatives of the Czech and Slovak exile communities (most notably Tomáš Masaryk) signed the Pittsburgh Agreement, endorsing Czecho-Slovak independence. Domestically, Karel Kramář revived the National Committee (*Národní výbor*) on the 13th of July. This Committee, led by Kramář, Klofáč, Švehla, and Soukup, united the Young Czech, National Socialist, Agrarian, and Czech Social Democratic parties.¹⁰³⁰

Workers began fleeing their legally obligatory employment mining coal, producing coke, or forging steel, taking jobs under the counter, disappearing into the agricultural areas

¹⁰²⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Aug. 1, 1918/Pr. 504/20/Monatsbericht.

¹⁰²⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Jul. 1918/Pr. 504/20/Monatsbericht.

¹⁰²⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 177/Sig. 504/Jul. 1918/Pr. 504/20/Monatsbericht.

¹⁰²⁹Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed*. 33.

¹⁰³⁰Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*. 35.

surrounding Ostravsko to work in the fields or even into the woods to try to eke out a living off of the land. Senior Lieutenant Dr. Loew, on the 6th of May, reported employer complaints that "all possible employers [*Unternehmer*] hire miners without documentation, especially master builders."¹⁰³¹ Gendarme and police investigators sought to control the problem by investigating employers, particularly the labor-hungry master builders, but without significant success.¹⁰³²

The numbers of men defecting to the so-called "Green Corps" became a serious problem, both in terms of labor power available in Ostravsko and in the sense that large numbers of men were thumbing their nose at state and military authority. The administrators of the Austrian Mining and Steelworks Corporation reported on the 15th of May, for example, that nineteen men employed at mine shaft VII and its associated coking works had disappeared, likely to seek agricultural work in Hungary - an additional worker had previously been caught by the border police at Žilina/Sillein/Zsolna, at the Hungarian border.¹⁰³³ Gendarmes began objecting to being ordered to return these workers to their workplaces by force, claiming that such orders "are not in accordance with the Gendarme Instructions and consequently can not be obeyed."¹⁰³⁴ The Municipal Watch, which the Gendarmes identified as the ones responsible for undertaking this duty, also did not want the doubtful privilege and their mayors pleaded lack of manpower, claiming that it was indeed the Gendarme's responsibility in any case.¹⁰³⁵ Nevertheless, the Ministry of the Interior identified the problem as one through which "the Army administration is

¹⁰³¹ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 747/May 6, 1918/Anlässlich des gestrigen Streikes...

¹⁰³²ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 747/May 6, 1918/Aufnahme von Arbeitern ohne Arbeitsbuch.

¹⁰³³ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 186/Sig. 816/May 15, 1918/Zl. 907/Vom Betriebe Schacht VII und Koksanstalt Schacht VII...

¹⁰³⁴ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Jul. 22, 1918/In letzter Zeit...

¹⁰³⁵ZAO/PRMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Jul. 18, 1918/Pr. 1076/36/Der Bürgermeister von Zabreh ersucht...

losing a significant amount of unreplaceable labor and important concerns thus suffer a severe impediment."¹⁰³⁶ The Police Commissariat thus ordered all the district's Gendarme posts to redouble their investigative efforts in pursuit of vanished or undocumented workers, doubts or not.¹⁰³⁷

Gendarme resistance to such forceful ingathering was not limited only to workers fleeing their military labor, but extended to striking workers. On the 30th of June Major General von Naumann reported to the War Ministry in Vienna that Gendarme District Command Nr. 3 (Polish Ostrava/Ostrau) had refused orders to either collect and escort or record the names and arrest the sworn workers who had failed to arrive at work in the course of a mining strike on the 23rd of June.¹⁰³⁸ The State Gendarme Command in Opava/Troppau backed the District Command's refusal, leaving von Naumann with no other option but to use military units. These military units, though, required local leadership. The patrols themselves were foreign, unfamiliar with the lay of the land and the local people, and in most instances unable to speak the local language; "consequently, the use of the Gendarmerie for this purpose is unavoidable."¹⁰³⁹

His appeal was fruitless, though eventually a kind of compromise was found, at least regarding striking workers. On the 1st of September, now-General Maculan issued an entreaty to the Gendarme District Commands in Moravian and Polish Ostrava/Ostrau for assistance for his military patrols as absolutely necessary for collecting striking workers from the villages

¹⁰³⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Aug. 6, 1918/Pr. 1076/31/Kurrendierung entwichener Landsturmarbeiter.

¹⁰³⁷ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Aug. 6, 1918/Pr. 1076/31/Kurrendierung entwichener Landsturmarbeiter.

¹⁰³⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Jun. 30, 1918/Zl. 954/II/Zwangsweise Einbringung streikender Arbeiter durch Gend.-Posten.

¹⁰³⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Jun. 30, 1918/Zl. 954/II/Zwangsweise Einbringung streikender Arbeiter durch Gend.-Posten.

surrounding Vítkovice/Witkowitz. The Gendarmes, he offered, "needed only to provide assistance and help through their local knowledge. The removal [of the striking workers] is done by the soldiers themselves and therefore has nothing to do with the Gendarmerie."¹⁰⁴⁰ The Gendarme Commands finally accepted this compromise, which, as coerced return to work formed the central pillar of Habsburg response to strikes and passive resistance, was substantially helpful to security operations in Ostravsko.¹⁰⁴¹

On the 3rd of September, the Police Commissariat released a warning in Czech, German, and Polish to be posted across the district. Speaking to the sworn militia workers, "who have left their positions in the mineshafts or in other concerns under military supervision," the declaration bluntly spelled out that "the militia workers commit through such abandonment of the work assigned to them the crime of desertion and/or mutiny."¹⁰⁴² Employers were also targeted for hiring such workers, as "in this case incitement or accessory to the perpetration of the crime is grounded in §§314-317 of the Code of Military Justice. Regarding such crimes civilians are also liable to military penal jurisdiction."¹⁰⁴³ Finally, the Police Commissariat targeted agricultural employers, who were "warned against the employment of these soldier-workers escaped from their workplaces and given notice of the severe consequences of contravention [of this order]."¹⁰⁴⁴

By October, expectations of Habsburg collapse had become commonplace, and coexisted

¹⁰⁴⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Sep. 1, 1918/General Maculan ersucht...

¹⁰⁴¹For strike response policy, see: ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Aug. 30, 1918/Zl. 16410/Vorgehen im Falle einer Ausstadbewegung oder von Unruhen; Bestimmungen über die zwangsweise Einbringung der Arbeiter. Specific Gendarme District Commands continued to duck these duties until the collapse of the Monarchy, however.

¹⁰⁴²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Sep. 3, 1918/Warnung-Vystraha-Ostrzezenie.

¹⁰⁴³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Sep. 3, 1918/Warnung-Vystraha-Ostrzezenie.

¹⁰⁴⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Sep. 3, 1918/Warnung-Vystraha-Ostrzezenie.

uneasily with everyday business. *Na zdar* published articles comparing the present moment to the Russian Revolution and declaring that "one of the conditions of the conclusion of the world war, [is] that every nation will be able to alone and for themselves decide the meaning for Austria of the most tragic end of the war," while also recording mine inspections and state visits.¹⁰⁴⁵ Emperor Karl, in a last effort to salvage the territories of his House, released a manifesto on the 16th of October providing for a reorganization of the Monarchy along federal lines. Instead of inaugurating a new Habsburg era, it provided the final nail for the Monarchy's coffin.

On the 21st of October, the day that Wilson's reply recognizing the Czecho-Slovak National Council as a "*de facto* belligerent government" appeared in the Habsburg press, a group of German-nationalist deputies decided that for them the meaning of Austria was a German-dominated state.¹⁰⁴⁶ They withdrew from the *Reichsrat*, "declaring themselves to be the Provisional National Assembly of an independent German-Austrian state."¹⁰⁴⁷ The National Committee in Prague proclaimed a Czecho-Slovak Republic on the 28th of October in Prague, while the ethnic German population proclaimed themselves citizens of German-Austria on the 29th of October and their territory as a new state (*Land*) of Sudetenland, with their state capital in Opava/Troppau, the former Silesian state capital.¹⁰⁴⁸ The Duchy of Cieszyn was proclaimed an integral part of a restored Polish state on the next day, the 30th of October.¹⁰⁴⁹ Though Military

¹⁰⁴⁵AMO/NN10/9a/Inv. c. 632/Na zdar/Oct. 23, 1918/1/V době velkých událostí; AMO/NN10/9a/Inv. c. 632/Na zdar/Oct. 23, 1918/1/Zivnostenská a důlní inspekce; AMO/NN10/9a/Inv. c. 632/Na zdar/Oct. 30, 1918/1-2/O slučování; AMO/NN10/9/ Inv. c. 632/Na zdar/Oct. 30, 1918/3/Albrechtova jáma v Petřvaldě.

¹⁰⁴⁶Edvard Beneš, P. Selver, trans. *My War Memoirs* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928) 437-438. Cited in: Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 37.

¹⁰⁴⁷Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State that Failed*. 37.

¹⁰⁴⁸Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 263.

¹⁰⁴⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 190/Sig. 1523/Oct. 28, 1918/Zákon Národním výborem dne 28. října 1918;

Station Command Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau continued business as usual, the reign of the Habsburgs in Ostravsko had come to an end.¹⁰⁵⁰

The very severity of the disciplinary regime originally established in Ostravsko had by the end become counterproductive, with harsh treatment inciting rather than hindering strike movements.¹⁰⁵¹ Though successful in maintaining production during the first stages of the First World War, the disciplinary regime eventually exhausted its capacity to mobilize labor. Over the last two years of the war state violence against strikes and hunger protests began to increase both qualitatively and quantitatively, and by 1918 the armed forces were routinely firing upon crowds in the lands of the Bohemian crown.¹⁰⁵² In the Fall of 1918 military units on patrol in Ostravsko outside of the major cities operated under essentially free-fire conditions, opening up on anyone who refused halt orders or attempted to flee.¹⁰⁵³ Dragoon and infantry regiments were being deployed to bring in the ever-increasing numbers of striking or resisting workers from their homes across Ostravsko into their workplaces.¹⁰⁵⁴ Food sales could only be undertaken in the presence of armed guards.¹⁰⁵⁵ Since April, basic Municipal Watch duties had increasingly been taken over by military units.¹⁰⁵⁶ Production collapsed as passive resistance and worker flight

PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 190/Sig. 1523/Oct. 30, 1918/Ludu ślaski!

¹⁰⁵⁰See ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 189/Sig. 1341/Oct. 29, 1918/Militärstationskommando-Befehl Nr. 302.

¹⁰⁵¹Huemos, "Kartoffeln her," 273.

¹⁰⁵²Huemos, "Kartoffeln her," 262. Deadly force was used 21 times between 1915 and 1916, 78 times in 1917, and 93 times in 1918 before the final collapse.

¹⁰⁵³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Sep. 17, 1918/Nachdem sich schon heute um 6 Uhr früh...

¹⁰⁵⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 187/Sig. 1076/Sep. 1918/Zl. 979res/Die Patrouille des Dragonerregiments Nr. 15...

¹⁰⁵⁵ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Apr. 9, 1918/Zl. 484/151/Seit dem Unruhen im Monate Juli 1917...

¹⁰⁵⁶ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Apr. 14, 1918/Zl. 128/Assistenztruppen- Verwendung zu Bewachungsdiensten.

emptied the district's factories and mines. Habsburg authority had collapsed in most practical senses months before the actual disintegration in late October and early November 1918.

EPILOGUE

Území obývané Němci jest území naše a zůstane naším...Opakuji: my jsme vytvořili náš stát a tím se určuje státoprávní postavení našich Němců, kteří původně přišli do země jako kolonisté a emigranti.

The territory populated by Germans is our territory and remains ours...I repeat: we have created our state and thereby is dictated our constitutional position towards the Germans, who originally came to our land as colonists and emigrees.

-Dr. Tomáš Masaryk, Address to the National Assembly.
Dec. 22nd, 1918.

The collapse of Habsburg authority in late October left the district in a tenuous state of semi-revolution. The Habsburg Monarchy was gone. Multiple national councils and committees claimed authority over Ostravsko's territory, economic output, and mining wealth. While the former Habsburg authorities ordered cooperation with the new Czecho-Slovak authorities in a bid to prevent the Monarchy from plummeting into Bolshevism, German-nationalists, Polish-nationalists, and the workers as workers acted to protect what they understood to be their own interests.

The collapse of legitimate political authority forced individuals to fall back on alternate modes of political organization. Political organizations, trade unions, work shifts, and local or municipal administrative bodies offered possibilities for new loyalties and formed the basis for new kinds of legitimacy.

The National Committee for Silesia (*Zemský národní výbor pro Slezsko*) constituted itself on the 28th of October, in Opava/Troppau, the same day as the annunciation of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. On the 1st of November, now in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau, the National Committee proclaimed its authority to govern all of the former Crownland of Austrian Silesia, though in truth its authority remained limited.¹⁰⁵⁷ The membership of the Committee was Jan Prokeš, Dr. Karel Fajfrlík, and Otto Štěpánek. Jan Prokeš, leader of the Czech Social-Democratic autonomists in Ostravsko, former editor of *Duch času*, and now-former Social Democratic *Reichsrat* delegate, chaired the committee. Karel Fajfrlík, president of the Sokol for Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau since 1900 and since 1906 member of the Moravian State Parliament for the People's Progress Party for Moravia (*Lidovou stranu pokrokovou na Moravě*) was his deputy. Otto Štěpánek, the third member of the Committee, was editor of the People's Press (*Lidové*

¹⁰⁵⁷Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism: The Emergence of National and Ethnic Groups in Prussian Silesia and Austrian Silesia, 1848-1918* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2007). 265-266. The authority to do so was self-granted.

knihtiskárny) in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau.

The men of State Gendarme Command Nr. 10, headquartered in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, received an order to cooperate with the new authorities on the 29th.¹⁰⁵⁸ The next day, the Police Commissariat Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau received an order from Brno, with the 'Imperial-Royal' hastily scratched off of the form, from the now-former Statthalter ordering cooperation with the new authorities in the interest of maintaining order.¹⁰⁵⁹ The day after that, on the 31st of October, former Habsburg soldiers who supported a Czech national state disarmed and interned their former ethnic-German comrades. A Czech National Guard quickly displaced the now-quiescent Habsburg military appointees charged with security in the district.¹⁰⁶⁰ On the 2nd of November, the National Committee (*Národní výbor*) officially assumed "state military power..." and "orders, that every Czech soldier in the coal district announce himself for military service."¹⁰⁶¹ The National Committee in Moravian Ostrava/Ostrau also wrote on the 2nd of November to the Moravian-Silesian Sokol leadership, requesting "that they organize and completely take over public security services, potentially also including use of armed force."¹⁰⁶² Though these transitions were certainly momentous, §§ II and III of the Prague National Committee's decree creating an independent Czecho-Slovakia retained all state and imperial laws and ordinances in

¹⁰⁵⁸ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 189/Sig. 1341/Oct. 29, 1918/Militärstationskommando-Befehl Nr. 302.

¹⁰⁵⁹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 190/Sig. 1523/Oct. 30, 1918/Zl. 20366/Zásady por úřadování za nových poměrů; ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 190/Sig. 1523/Oct. 30, 1918/Zl. 20366/An alle Herren Vorstände der politischen Bezirksbehörden in Mähren.

¹⁰⁶⁰AVZ/VHHT/133/675/Nov. 1, 1918/An den geehrten Gewerkschaftsrat der Witkowitz Bergbau- und Eisenhütten-Gewerkschaft. They aimed to replace most importantly General Heinrich von Naumann and Station Commandant for Moravian Ostrava Franz Brandstätter.

¹⁰⁶¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 190/Sig. 1523/Nov. 2, 1918/Vyhláška. [*V*]ojenská státní moc...i nařizují, aby všichni čeští vojáci v uhelném revíru se přihlásili ku konání vojenské služby.

¹⁰⁶²Otáhal, 89. SAO, ZNV pro Slezsko, jednací spisy 1918. [*A*]by organizovala a převzala úplně veřejnou bezpečnostní službu, případně i za použití zbraní.

effect and all formerly Habsburg government organs continued to administrate as before.¹⁰⁶³

Regardless of how measured the state transition was, though, the workers saw this transition as a revolutionary break with previous practice. The Austrian Mining and Steelworks Corporation, in recognition of changed circumstances, renamed their Austria and Habsburg shafts to Barbara and Fortschritt (Progress) respectively.¹⁰⁶⁴ Walkouts and absenteeism became ubiquitous especially at Vítkovice, as well as stormy strike actions. Workers wanted higher wages, the removal of hated officials and overseers, and the introduction of a raft of Socialist-inspired labor reforms, and were perfectly willing to take to the streets to get them. The National Committee for Silesia later wrote that "from every side threatened eruptions of strikes and disorders...it was about the billions in property, on which the further development of the republic depended unconditionally, and...threatened acquisition by the most seditious elements, whose actions had an unhappy impact on the sensitive situation of our entire state in the provisional era..."¹⁰⁶⁵

Fears of Bolshevism and anarchy drove the use of gendarme and occasionally military units to suppress these strikes and restore order. Such anti-worker violence enraged the workers, who by and large felt that they had a proprietary interest in the new state. In one such instance they announced to the summoned gendarmes that "police do not have the right or the authorization to intervene against miners and use weapons."¹⁰⁶⁶ During a strike at the Teresa

¹⁰⁶³ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 190/Sig. 1523/Oct. 28, 1918/Zákon Národním výborem dne 28. října 1918, §II, III.

¹⁰⁶⁴ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 197/Sig. 157/Jan. 31, 1919/An das Polizeikommissariat.

¹⁰⁶⁵Otáhal, 91-92. SAO, ZNV pro Slezsko, 1697/18. [Z]e všech stran hrozilo vypuknutí stávků a nepokoje...jednalo se o miliardové majetky, od nichž závisí bezpodmínečně další rozvoj republiky, a...hrozily nabýti vrchu radikální rozvratné živly, jejichž působení mělo neblahý vliv na choulostivou situaci celého našeho státu v době přechodné...

¹⁰⁶⁶SAO, ZNV pro Slezsko, 81/18. Cited in: Otáhal, 90. Incident occurred in Dolní Suchá/Niederschau. This was, at least legally, incorrect. [Č]etnictvo nemá právo a oprávnění proti horníkům zakročit a použít zbraní.

mine, the striking workers assaulted the summoned gendarmes and attempted to disarm them.¹⁰⁶⁷

Factory workers and miners began holding peoples' courts led by their stewards (*důvěrníky*) to indict and convict officials, overseers, and masters who had mistreated and cheated them during the war.

The security forces scratched together were by no means equal to the task before them, and the National Committee repeatedly requested reinforcements from Brno/Brünn.¹⁰⁶⁸ The Social Democratic organization, well-represented by the Chairman of the Committee, played a central role in suppressing worker agitation and unrest, which in turn brought the long-simmering internal tension among the workers' movement to a head.¹⁰⁶⁹ Workers' Soviets started to appear in the district in the 2nd half of November, and it was not until the 7th Division of the Czech Legion occupied Opava/Troppau on December 18th that public order and security could begin to be established. On the 14th of January, 1919, for example, the Police Commissioner issued an order in response to the "removal of officials and overseers at numerous operations from mine shafts, who had been run off by the miners over a barrel."¹⁰⁷⁰ This "crime of public violence is an unjustified curtailment of personal freedom" was to be "immediately investigated and perpetrators are to be immediately brought before the court."¹⁰⁷¹ When available, military forces routinely intervened in disputes between employers and employees on behalf of the

¹⁰⁶⁷SAO, ZNV pro Slezsko, 745/18. Cited in: Otáhal, 90.

¹⁰⁶⁸SAB, ZPS, 313 Nr. 21705. Cited in: Otáhal, 89.

¹⁰⁶⁹Otáhal, 91.

¹⁰⁷⁰ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/196/64/Jan. 14, 1919/Zl. 64/Odstraňování úředníků a dozorců ze závodů. ...*odstranění na mnohých závodech úředníci a dozorcí ze šachty, při čemž tito byli vyvezení horníky na tačkách.*

¹⁰⁷¹ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/196/64/Jan. 14, 1919/Zl. 64/Odstraňování úředníků a dozorců ze závodů. ...*jest daná skutková podstata zločinu veřejného násilí, neprávěním omezováním osobní svobody...budiž neprodleně vyšetřen a jest učiniti ihned trestní oznámení příslušnému soudu.*

employers, a practice which came to an end only in May 1919.¹⁰⁷²

The National Committee later justified their armed crackdown on workers' and miners' political and economic engagement by arguing that in the district "chaos and insecurity ruled completely...Bolshevik currents in the broad masses of workers began to spread by threatening means and there was the danger that the entire region, which represented hundreds of millions in value, could become as a consequence of the locally stormy disordered conditions, which could eventually annihilate this national property and completely threaten all manner of danger."¹⁰⁷³

The Bolshevik threat was hardly imaginary. Red revolution was spreading like wildfire across the former territories of the defeated and dissolved Central Powers. Béla Kun was building a substantial following in Budapest, and Hungary would become a Soviet Republic in March of 1919. In Bavaria, Kurt Eisner led a Socialist revolution against the Wittelsbachs on November 8th, and Bavaria went Soviet in April 1919. Germany was wracked by unrest, workers' and soldiers' councils, and Spartacist and Freikorps violence.

Workers' councils and spontaneous demonstrations and trials in Ostravsko threatened similar results, and it was not only the general mass of the workers who were influenced by Bolshevik rhetoric and methods. Josef Pergel, Secretary of the Union of Steel- and Metalworkers (*Svaz železo- a kovodělníků*) chaired a meeting of the Socialist organization *Spravedlnost* (*Justice*) on the 20th of November, on the theme of "Revolution in Europe." He levelled criticism at the repressive measures undertaken by the new provisional government, including the re-introduction of preventative censorship and military measures - "capitalism remains always the

¹⁰⁷²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/198/404/May 20, 1919/Zl. 6956/Vojenské asistence.

¹⁰⁷³Otáhal, 92. SAO, ZNV pro Slezsko, 515-517/18. [P]anoval úplný chaos a nejistota...Bolševické proudy v širokých masách dělnických se počaly hrozivým způsobem šířiti a bylo nebezpečí, že celý ten kraj, který reprezentuje cenu sta-milionů, stane se následkem rozháraných poměrů dějištěm bouří, které by nakonec zničily tento národní majetek a ohrozily úplně všelikou bezpečnost.

same, whether the machine has currently a black-yellow, or a white-red coat of paint..."¹⁰⁷⁴

He further criticized militarism, and sharply attacked the farmers, "who had not hesitated to accept as payment for food the shirt off of the worker's back and the gold of wedding rings."¹⁰⁷⁵ As a means of combating capitalism, "he argued that the Russian method was the best and listed examples, such as we here at home know of Russia."¹⁰⁷⁶ Finally "he noted that even harder struggles than at the front now stood here before us."¹⁰⁷⁷

But the Bolshevik thread was also not the only one to be found in worker circles. Former Social Democratic *Reichsrat* representative Dr. Zigmund Witt chaired a workers' meeting in Polish Ostrava/Ostrau on the 1st of December to speak on the Czecho-Slovak state, in which he advanced a much more conciliatory message than Pergel's. When speaking about Bolshevism, Witt argued that it had harmed many Social Democratic comrades, and declared that "the workforce ought be warned, in order that Bolshevism not be brought from Russian territory, in order that peace be maintained, in order that rioting not break out..."¹⁰⁷⁸ Revolutionary Marxism's appeal, as it happened, was actually quite limited; the lack of a committed revolutionary cadre as well as competition from a meaningful and functional alternative in the form of nationalist proto-states.

Moreover, the National Committee moved to blunt revolutionary Bolshevism's appeal through the fulfillment of worker demands. On the 11th of November, the National Committee sent a demand for the introduction of an eight hour day in all Vítkovice operations by the 1st of

¹⁰⁷⁴ZAO/PŘMO – Relace ze schůzi/Kč 1164/Sig. 2113/Nov. 21, 1918/Versammlungsbericht.

¹⁰⁷⁵ZAO/PŘMO – Relace ze schůzi/Kč 1164/Sig. 2113/Nov. 21, 1918/Versammlungsbericht.

¹⁰⁷⁶ZAO/PŘMO – Relace ze schůzi/Kč 1164/Sig. 2113/Nov. 21, 1918/Versammlungsbericht.

¹⁰⁷⁷ZAO/PŘMO – Relace ze schůzi/Kč 1164/Sig. 2113/Nov. 21, 1918/Versammlungsbericht.

¹⁰⁷⁸ZAO/PŘMO – Relace ze schůzi/Kč 1164/Sig. 2192/Dec. 1, 1918/Správa přes schůzi.

December. General Director Sonnenschein responded in the affirmative, and "thereby is one of the most important demands of the workers of the Vítkovice Steelworks, for which they have struggled for so long, fulfilled."¹⁰⁷⁹ On the evening of the 14th of November the National Committee brought together representatives of the mining population and of the various mining companies and, after extensive negotiations, the mining companies conceded an eight hour work day for mine labor as well, including entry into and exit from the mine. At the strong suggestion of the National Committee this new regulation came into effect on the 18th. Further, at the same meeting, the mine companies were compelled to concede a minimum wage, which was to equal seventy-five percent of the average wage paid in that concern over the previous pay period.¹⁰⁸⁰ The Prague government also took upon itself the task of provisioning the industrial district.¹⁰⁸¹ When the workers struck, local Czecho-Slovak representatives took them seriously; workers on strike at the Terezia shaft on the 21st of November demanded wage increases and the removal of two hated overseers, and the Secretary of the Czecho-Slovak Miners Union, Šída, arrived to browbeat the mine administration into bowing to the workers' demands.¹⁰⁸²

Red Revolution was not the only threat to Prague's control over this economically vital borderland. Following Emperor Karl's abdication on the 11th of November (and Germany's surrender), the war was over. The war ended, though, with no Allied forces anywhere on Habsburg soil. The post-war territorial settlements were to be determined largely through facts on the ground. This was as clear to the Polish and German nationalists who had no wish to live in

¹⁰⁷⁹AMO/ GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 14, 1918/316/4/Acht Stunden-Arbeitstag im Witkowitzter Eisenwerk.

¹⁰⁸⁰AMO/GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 16, 1918/318/3/Der Achtstudentag im Bergbau.

¹⁰⁸¹AMO/GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Dec. 1, 1918/333/5/Die Ostrauer Bergerbeiterschaft erhält Lebensmittel aus Böhmen.

¹⁰⁸²ZAO/PŘMO-Presidiální spisy/Kč 188/Sig. 1131/Dec. 14, 1918/Pr. 1101/Správci zemské vlády slezské politické zprávy Národního výboru.

a Czech-dominated state as it was to the Czech-nationalists who aimed to seize all the territory possible. Accordingly, on the 30th of October former German-nationalist representatives for the now-defunct *Reichsrat* in Vienna from Silesia declared the independence of the new province of the Sudetenland, with Opava/Troppau as its capitol.¹⁰⁸³ The Prague government, according to press reports, responded by deciding "to mobilize the youngest year-class and undertake a proper military occupation of German-Bohemia" on the 13th of November.¹⁰⁸⁴

Groups of German-nationalist militias (*Volkswehren* or *Volksheere*), some affiliated with the various provinces of German-Bohemia, some not, organized themselves to resist what they saw as Czecho-Slovak aggression following Karl's abdication. These militias - spearheaded by Socialists - launched strikes and passive obstruction all over German-nationalist strongholds across Bohemia and Moravia. Most of these attempts aimed at preventing access or use of railroads and factories.¹⁰⁸⁵ One incident in Brůx/Most, in November, erupted into machine gun fire between the local *Volkswehr* and the Czecho-Slovak Army attempting to occupy the city. Newspaper accounts reported dozens of wounded and at least several dead.¹⁰⁸⁶ On the 15th, a Czech-nationalist militia patrol attempted to inspect a train at the rail station in Opava/Troppau carrying a Sudeten-German patrol, a provocation to which the Sudetens responded by opening fire. In the ensuing exchange of shots two soldiers were seriously wounded, though the report

¹⁰⁸³Robert Freißler was the provisional governor, and his deputy was Hans Jokl. Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 263.

¹⁰⁸⁴AMO/GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 14, 1918/316/1/Vor der miliärischen Besetzung Deutschböhmens durch die Tschechen.

¹⁰⁸⁵See for example: AMO/GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 16, 1918/318/3/Die deutschen Eisenbahnen im tschecho-slowakischen Staat.

¹⁰⁸⁶K.F. Bahm, "The Inconveniences of Nationality: German Bohemians, the Disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Attempt to Create a "Sudeten German" Identity," *Nationalities Papers* 27:3 (1999), 375-405. 389.

does not specify on which side.¹⁰⁸⁷ Outside of scattered incidents such as this, though, the *Volkswehr* for the province of Sudetenland did not offer armed resistance despite having grown to almost seven thousand men. Tomasz Kamusella argues that this lack of armed resistance stemmed from a firm belief in the imminence of Allied-instigated plebiscites, a belief that was comprehensively falsified.

Opava/Troppau was occupied by the 7th Division of the Czech Legion, recently arrived from Italy, on the 18th of December, and the Sudetenland government met for the last time on February 18th, 1919. It was clear that plebiscites were not to be forthcoming, and that the ethnically German population of Northern Moravia and Western Silesia were now citizens of a new Czech-dominated state. On the 4th of March, coinciding with the convening of the German-Austrian National Assembly, Sudeten Germans launched a series of protest demonstrations and marches which ended with Czecho-Slovak troops opening fire on the unarmed crowds. Fifty-three people died and over eighty were wounded in demonstrations across the Republic.¹⁰⁸⁸

Polish-nationalist actors in Ostravsko seized the moment following the collapse of Habsburg authority in an attempt to ensure that their claims to the area were respected even prior to the establishment of a Polish state on the 11th of November. Following Karl's October 16th proclamation re-organizing the Monarchy on the basis of a federation of nationalities, Father Londzin, Jan Michejda, and Tadeusz Reger established the National Council of the State of Těšín (*Rada Narodowa Księstwa Cieszyńskiego*) to exercise sovereign authority on behalf of the as-yet non-existent Polish state. On the evening of the 31st of October this National Council, with the support of ethnic-Polish officers of the Habsburg Army, organized a coup in

¹⁰⁸⁷AMO/GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 16, 1918/318/4/ Eine Schiesserei zwischen einer deutschen und einer tschechischen Patrouille in Schlesien.

¹⁰⁸⁸Bahm, "The Inconveniences of Nationality," 389-390.

Těšín/Teschen/Cieszyn. After seizing control of East Silesia, the National Council quickly organized a civil militia numbering between two thousand and two thousand five hundred men, and was accepted by the Polish authorities in Warsaw and Kraków as a legitimate representative of the Polish government.¹⁰⁸⁹

On the 5th of November, the National Council of the State of Těšín (on behalf of Poland) and the National Committee for Silesia (on behalf of but without the sanction of Czecho-Slovakia) concluded an agreement to divide suzerainty over Silesia, cutting Ostravsko in half. All of the land to the east of the Ostravice river, the demarcation line between Moravian and Polish Ostrava/Ostrau, was to be administered by the Polish-nationalist Council while territory to the west of the river was to be ruled by the Czech-nationalist Committee.

This entente was, however, short-lived. On the 13th of November, the Czech National Committee in Prague declared this entente "null and void, in that they denied the National Committee for Silesia's right to conclude such treaties...the Czech National Committee in Prague decided, that the entire duchy of Těšín/Teschen/Cieszyn ought be included in the Czech Republic.¹⁰⁹⁰ This move co-incided with maximalist Czech-nationalist territorial ambitions - a local newspaper, the *Morgenzeitung*, reported maps for sale in Prague bookstores marking "the entirety of Bohemia, Moravia, East and West Silesia, the Hungarian county of Komitat, and Slovakia reaching all the way to Budapest" as territory of the new Czecho-Slovak state.¹⁰⁹¹ Though local cooperation between the National Committee for Silesia and the National Council of the State of Těšín continued, Prague mobilized.

Těšín/Teschen/Cieszyn also mobilized; the Commandant of Polish forces in the area,

¹⁰⁸⁹Tomasz Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 265.

¹⁰⁹⁰AMO/ GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 14, 1918/316/2/Ein tschechisch-polnischer Konflikt.

¹⁰⁹¹AMO/ GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 14, 1918/316/2/Ein tschechisch-polnischer Konflikt.

General Alexandrowicz, issued a mobilization order in early November calling the ethnic-Polish population of Ostravsko to arms in defense of what was putatively now their fatherland.¹⁰⁹²

Habsburg Silesia was not the most pressing arena of conflict for the new Polish state, engaged as it was on all of its borders. The struggle with German forces in Upper Silesia and with Ukrainian forces in the Western Ukraine, for instance, were much more central to Polish nation-building than Těšín/Teschen/Cieszyn. The same was not true for Prague - not only was Ostravsko an essential industrial region, but the strategic Košice/Kaschau railroad, running through the heart of Ostravsko, was the only reliable connection between the Czech heartlands and recently-seized Slovakia.

Consequently, on the 23rd of January, 1919, the Czecho-Slovak Army, supported by Italian and French troops, invaded East Silesia.¹⁰⁹³ This invasion, unlike the occupations of German-Bohemia or Slovakia, did not go smoothly. The initial attack moved quickly, and Czecho-Slovak troops reached the provincial capital, Těšín/Teschen/Cieszyn, by the 26th. The invaders entered the city the next day, led by armored cars equipped with machine guns. As Czech troops raised the Czecho-Slovak flag in place of the Polish over the City Hall's tower, the soldiers assembled below broke out into cries of 'Na Zdar!' and began singing the Czech national anthem, *Kde domov můj*. Regardless of the occupation, though, the Warsaw government refused to abandon the province as demanded by Prague and resolved to defend it as best as possible.¹⁰⁹⁴ A combination of civic militias, the Polish armed forces, and ethnically Polish workers and miners managed to stall the Czecho-Slovak advance following the battle of Skočov/Skotschau/Skoczów on the 28th, and a temporary armistice was signed on the 30th. This

¹⁰⁹²AMO/ GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 17, 1918/319/5/Der tschechisch-polnische Ausgleich.

¹⁰⁹³Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 267.

¹⁰⁹⁴AMO/GM4/4e/2896/Morgenzeitung/Jan. 29, 1919/29/3/Die Besetzung von Teschen.

brief border war cost around one hundred and fifty dead and roughly a thousand wounded.¹⁰⁹⁵

The final settlement of the Silesian question was not to arrive until the 28th of July, 1920, over a year later, when the Versailles Conference concluded their deliberations. Poland received the city of Těšín/Teschen/Cieszyn and the territory northwards, while the rest of the province (the vast majority) went to Czecho-Slovakia. In the meantime, Czech troops remained in occupation of the province and its Polish-nationalist inhabitants chafed against what they viewed as foreign occupation.¹⁰⁹⁶ A strike mounted by Polish-nationalist miners broke out in the Silesian area of Ostravsko in early February. Less than a week later mining representatives were brought to a meeting with political and economic officials as well as representatives of Czech-national worker organizations, and in the face of a strong military presence the Polish workers' representatives eventually proceeded to vote for a resolution in which they agreed "that the workers would immediately resume work."¹⁰⁹⁷ In response, the nearly ten thousand men who made up the Polish "mining workforce declared themselves, however, in disagreement with the agreement [concluded by] their trustees and resolved to continue the strike."¹⁰⁹⁸

Dissatisfied Polish-nationalist workers did not limit themselves to strikes. Josef Mokros, the chairman of the Czechoslovak Organization (*Československá organizace*) in Ostravsko, and František Damek, representative of the workers of Czechoslovakia (*zástupce dělníků Československa*) submitted a request to the commanding officer of the occupying forces in Karviná/Karwin on the 23rd of March, 1919. In this appeal, the undersigned "decisively protest"

¹⁰⁹⁵Kamusella, *Silesia and Central European Nationalism*. 267; AMO/GM4/4e/2896/Morgenzeitung/Feb. 1, 1919/32/2/Ein 24-stündiger Waffenstillstand zwischen Tschechen und Polen.

¹⁰⁹⁶AMO/GM4/4e/2896/Morgenzeitung/Feb. 8, 1919/39/4/Keine Abberufung tschechischer Truppen.

¹⁰⁹⁷AMO/GM4/4e/2896/Morgenzeitung/Feb. 15, 1919/46/3/Der Streik der polnischen Bergarbeiter im Karwiner Revier beendet.

¹⁰⁹⁸AMO/GM4/4e/2896/Morgenzeitung/Feb. 16, 1919/47/5/Keine Beilegung des Streiks der polnischen Bergarbeiter im Karwiner Revier.

against "the re-establishment by the Polish workforce in the mine shafts of the former Polish 'militia' in the place of our Czech military."¹⁰⁹⁹

Following the stabilization of the new state and its borders, the Czechoslovak state moved against the workers. In December of 1920, armed police detachments forcefully occupied the People's House (*Lidový dům*) in Prague and seized the Social Democratic printing press there.¹¹⁰⁰ In response the left wing of the Social Democrats, whose printing press it was, launched general strikes across the country. These strikes began in Ostravsko among the mining population, with the workforce at five mines striking the first day and at an additional eight mines and a number of industrial concerns the following day. Police units and moderate Social Democrats endeavored to suppress the strikes in Ostravsko and elsewhere. After their outbreak, though, Army units (infantry, machine gun, and mounted dragoon detachments), Gendarmes, police, and a citizen's militia, a so-called "White Guard," moved against the striking masses.¹¹⁰¹ In Ostravsko, the strike at its height involved around forty-five thousand workers - twenty-five thousand miners and twenty thousand industrial workers. Less than a week after it began, though, the strike wave in Ostravsko collapsed under military occupation.¹¹⁰² Six months later, in May 1921, the left wing of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party split off from the main party, founding the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

Ostravsko remained a critical industrial center as well as a contested one. Ostrava was the first city to be occupied during the Nazi invasion of rump Czechoslovakia. Vítkovice steel and Ostravan coal fueled the Nazi war machine during the Second World War. Ostrava was a center

¹⁰⁹⁹ZAO/PŘMO – Presidialni Spisy/Kč 197/Sig. 339/Mar. 23, 1919/Slavné vojenské velitelství.

¹¹⁰⁰Josef Kolečka, *Revoluční dělnické hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku*, 179.

¹¹⁰¹Josef Kolečka, *Revoluční dělnické hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku*, 185-201.

¹¹⁰²Josef Kolečka, *Revoluční dělnické hnutí na Moravě a ve Slezsku*, 205-206.

of Communist power before, during, and after the Communist seizure of power in 1948. The Vítkovice Steelworks were seized by the state, and, like the Austria and Habsburg mines before it, renamed the Klement Gottwald Vítkovice Steelworks to match the spirit of the times. Ostrava remains the third-largest city in the Czech Republic, though Communist mismanagement and environmental degradation resulted in a drastic restructuring of the Steelworks and the total cessation of coal mining. Poverty, unemployment, and the Communist Party of the Czech Republic (*Komunistická strana česká*) continue to be significant presences there.

CONCLUSION

*Wo ein freies Volk an die Arbeit geht,
Seinen Mut bewahrt in Glück und Not;
Wo der Liebe Hauch jedes Herz durchweht
Für den Landesvater und für Gott:
Dieses große Reich, stark und schön zugleich,
Ist mein Vaterland, mein Österreich.*

-W. Wenhart, "Mein Österreich."

*Where a free people go to work,
Their courage preserved in fortune and affliction;
Where the breath of love wafts through every heart
For the father of the land and for God:
This great realm, simultaneously strong and beautiful,
Is my fatherland, my Austria.*

The First World War was a catastrophic opportunity for some in Ostravsko, and merely a catastrophe for many others. Before the war, industrial workers and miners had come together as workers in defense of their interests and their dignity. This struggle had been prosecuted against the entrenched interests of capital - the lords of the great industrial concerns of the district. The Habsburg state participated only incidentally; military and political officials acted only as arbiters and guarantors of order and security. Beyond the commonalities of class, though, were increasingly virulent linguistic and nationalist antagonisms which, though hardly elemental or eternal, nevertheless came to shape the language and practice of political, social, and cultural engagement. These intersectional identities waxed and waned in importance at any given time. One evening a steelworker, born in Kraków, hurls a brick at one of the lords of capital who denied him and his fellows a wage increase, or protective equipment. The next week the same man hurls a very similar brick at a Czech-nationalist agitating to deny the Polish language a place in Silesian schools. In the interim, he and this Czech-nationalist share a glass of slivovice at a rally where Czech- and Polish-nationalist speakers thunder against the crimes of Germandom. Is this steelworker a Slav, a Pole, or a worker? He is all of these, and more - he is a skilled worker, he is male, he is a Habsburg citizen, a married man, a heavy drinker. The salience of these and other categories to his actions depends very much on context.

Following May Day of 1906, class solidarity came to the forefront. The events of "Bloody Sunday" in 1914, however, tapped into an increasingly powerful well of nationalist antagonism between Germanic and Slavic identities. For both class and national conflicts, the pre-war Habsburg state stood as an arbiter of political and social conflicts, defining and enforcing rules and boundaries which allowed contestation while retaining basic social cohesion and public order. The explosion of nationalist antagonisms immediately prior to the outbreak of

the war posed a serious threat to public order and property. They did not, however, pose any threat to Habsburg authority. The process of mobilization for the war demonstrated the continuing power and relevance of the Habsburg state, though certainly not its efficiency or strategic sense. The course of mobilization also brought a different identity to the fore - that of Habsburg citizen and patriot.

The experience of the war challenged the power and the relevance of the ancient Monarchy as well as the governability of its population. The beginning of the war brought about a kind of military dictatorship, working in cooperation with the administrative government which had ruled since the dissolution of the *Reichsrat* in 1913. This military dictatorship brought the Habsburg military's hatred of politics, nationalism, and socialism to the fore and led to a concerted effort to rebuild Habsburg society on a *Vormärz* model. In Ostravsko, this effort manifested itself first as a widespread incorporation of civilian labor into military models of authority and obedience based on a series of laws passed over the previous fifty years.

Such militarization of authority carried with it the threat of judicial and military violence, which was quickly deployed to control the behavior and punish the political activity of Ostravsko civilians. Organizational life was suppressed, worker agitation was crushed, newspapers and letters were censored. The panoply of rights and privileges formerly enjoyed by Cisleithanian citizens disappeared, as did the process of disinterested adjudication of those rights and privileges which was formerly a hallmark of Habsburg administrative practice. Deprivation and violence over the course of the war summoned up resistance both passive and active; strikes, strike waves, passive resistance, hunger demonstrations, and eventually mob violence repeatedly gripped the industrial district. The absolutist and anti-democratic military elite directing occupation policy in Ostravsko responded to spontaneous challenges by an engaged citizenry

with ever-increasing militarization necessitating ever-larger garrisons. During the war, the Habsburg state increasingly acted as a tyrant.

This house of guns collapsed in the summer of 1918; though Habsburg writ still technically stretched across the district, the population ranged from sullen to actively hostile. Workers and miners were fleeing their militarized employment and flooding into the fields and the forests, while armed military patrols roamed the district attempting to stem the tide of defectors. Workers and miners came to work surrounded by armed guards or not at all. Imperial Germany's final defeat on the battlefield turned *de facto* collapse, which had ruled for months, into *de jure* collapse and the end of the Habsburg Monarchy. In the end, the crisis of governance presented by the domestic experience of the First World War had rendered the Habsburg state despicable, and thus ultimately disposable.

This investigation has demonstrated a number of smaller claims regarding a variety of issues pertaining to late Habsburg history. The disappearance of ethno-nationalism as a driver of political activity at the beginning of the First World War speaks to the limitations of politicized nationalism in explaining the events of the First World War. Conversely, the success of ethno-nationalism as the main organizing principle of post-Habsburg politics speaks to the importance of nationalism as an organizing principle of the political imagination. The only alternate political program to gain any adherents following the dissolution of the Monarchy as a political entity was revolutionary Marxism, and a Soviet-model state failed to achieve majority support even among its natural constituencies, coal miners and industrial labor.

The experience of Ostravsko also speaks to the nature of protest before, during, and after the First World War. Protest spanned the spectrum from individual to collective acts, from scripted to completely spontaneous, and from self-consciously political to the entirely apolitical.

Gossip and rumors undercut morale and heightened suspicion of the government, the military, and other inhabitants of Ostravsko, whether intentionally or otherwise, and brought individuals such as Anna Szwiertnia and Julie Kolesa before military tribunals. Underground distribution of notes, letters, and placards constituted another layer of action largely beyond the control of state authorities, one which expressed hostility to the state, dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the district, and occasionally hostility towards the men and workers who were failing to resolve matters to the satisfaction of the authors. Both verbal and written material also offered opportunities to spread word of and encourage strikes and demonstrations as well as commiserate over difficult conditions.

Hostile reactions extended beyond words. Destruction of property, such as Josef Faber's creative use of mine carts or the arson which incinerated the mineral oil refinery in Bohumín/Oderberg, threatened the material basis of war production. As such, it was harshly punished when perpetrators could be identified. Disobedience and disorderly or unruly behavior was much more frequent, but also less dangerous to the war effort and and much less harshly punished. Small fines or a day or two of detention awaited those who refused to disperse when ordered, at least those that were caught. Demonstrations against shortages, against rationing, or against perceived or actual failures of the Habsburg welfare state which was constructed after the outbreak of the war occurred regularly. These demonstrations were almost uniformly the work of women and children, for the simple reason that women and children were not sworn workers, and thus as long as they remained inside the boundaries of martial law were far less vulnerable to legal punishment.

Planned strikes, such as the May Day 1906 or the Epiphany 1918 strikes, represented the traditional means for organized labor to exert pressure. Before the war, these strikes engaged

with the state largely incidentally, when their scope extended beyond economic pressure and became a threat to order and property. During the war, labor leaders in Austria-Hungary as in Germany refused to organize or legitimize strike movements, hoping instead to make themselves useful to the state and thereby win concessions following the war. Pressure from their constituents forced the organization of the Epiphany strikes, but quickly thereafter the strike as a form of protest was essentially abandoned. Organized, planned protests with specific goals placed enormous weight on remaining peaceful and orderly both before and during the war. Even in trying circumstances, protests such as the Epiphany strikes remained calm and proceeded without incident. Even the nationalist rallies following Bloody Sunday in 1914 unfolded peacefully, though the consequences thereof were not so peaceful.

Unplanned strikes and protests, though, very often deteriorated into violence. These outbursts, which could be sparked by any number of relatively small annoyances once the underlying situation had worsened sufficiently, frequently ended in violence of some sort. Either mob violence, directed against class, nationalist, or government targets, police and military violence directed against the crowd such as Colonel Maculan's purges, or, as in the July Events of 1917, both. Army units firing on crowds were not necessarily perpetrating massacres; in some instances they were defending their own lives against potentially lethal mob violence.

The upper echelons of the military occupation did not see themselves as an occupying force exercising brutal repression against the civilian population. There is some indirect evidence that members of the rank and file did see themselves as such and supported the workers more than their own superiors. The upper officers commanding the military reflected the sense of knightliness that pervaded the Habsburg officer corps, a sense which fueled the military's obsession with oaths and oathbreakers. As with the unfortunate Alois Schmied, an oath, they felt,

was an oath, coerced or not, understood or not, it was binding. Theirs, they felt, was a lonely and frustrating war against traitors, oathbreakers, russophiles, and spies who whipped the masses into a frenzy against their rightful rulers. From this as well as their view of the population as ideally inert apolitical objects of state management followed their relentless focus on ringleaders. From this perspective, if the spies and traitors could be removed or frightened away, then the mass of workers would return to docility.

The implausibility of this view was conclusively demonstrated by the withdrawal of engagement that brought down Habsburg rule in the summer of 1918. A collective and generalized refusal to work was augmented by widespread attempts to flee not only particular labor positions but the municipalities of Ostravsko and in many cases Cisleithania in general. Much as the British Raj failed to find an effective answer to Gandhi's Indian National Congress thirty years later, loss of legitimacy coupled with the failure of armed force left Maculan, Woitsch, Brandstätter, and von Naumann grasping at straws. Habsburg authority stretched only as far as the effective range of their soldiers' rifles.

There remains much work to be done. The Habsburg officer corps has been the subject of some investigation; the men who carried out their orders, though, remain ciphers. To what extent were their loyalties to the Army and its values? Did they sympathize with their resisting countrymen or regard them as traitors? On what grounds, and to what ends? It was to some extent pure chance whether a conscripted worker ended up in a militia battalion such as the 31st Infantry or in an industrial concern working for the state, even though these paths resulted in being on different sides of the firing line during the war.

There similarly remain many unanswered questions regarding the everyday life of the population of Ostravsko. The informal networks which bound together the workers and families

of the various municipalities and worker colonies in the district have been demonstrated to exist, but have not been traced or analyzed in any depth. To what extent were these networks multi-lingual? Did these networks transcend class or type of work? If so, to what extent? How did transportation networks and commercial activities shape the patterns of everyday life? How did family life influence behavior? What forms of entertainment engaged the district's residents?

These questions extend into the ambit of labor historians as well. I have sought to present a useful account of the actions of groups of workers in the sphere of resistance and protest. The internal dynamics of work, though, remain largely unexplored. What kinds of relationships did workers have with the kinds of work that they did? How did the internal social dynamics of individual mine or factory shifts function? To what extent were overseers or supervisors independent of management or vulnerable to pressure from the rank and file? Answers to these kinds of questions would help us understand why some groups of workers struck and others did not, as well as to better understand the internal labor dynamics involved.

Finally, many aspects of cultural and intellectual life and production remain to be analyzed. What the actions taken by workers and citizens in Ostravsko *meant* to them has been largely beyond the remit of the present work. This is also true of the rank and file of the Army as well as largely for the Gendarmes, the large employers, and the bureaucrats and elected officials responsible for implementing and to some extent devising government policy. Some work on these classes as classes in the late Habsburg Monarchy has been done, but much more remains to be done to understand the specific meanings of specific undertakings before, during, and after the First World War.¹¹⁰³

¹¹⁰³For officials, see: Aleš Vyskočil, *C.k. úředník ve zlatém věku jistoty* (Prague: Historický ústav, 2009). For employers, see: Petr Popelka, *Zrod moderního podnikatelstva: bratři Kleinové a podnikatelé v českých zemích a Rakouském císařství v éře kapitalistické industrializace* (Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita, 2011). For a series of quite short but informative single examples, see: Milan Myška, Aleš Zářický, eds., *Člověk v Ostravě v XIX. století*. (Ostrava: Kazimierz Gajdzica, 2007).

Following the Habsburg disintegration, the breakdown of civil order and civic patriotism empowered nationalist and socialist organizations. Each of the inhabitants of Ostravsko had to ask themselves very basic questions, perhaps for the first time - what state do I belong to? How can I guarantee the security of myself and my family? Which laws, if any, am I bound to follow? In essence, which persons or institutions legitimately exercise political power? National Councils and Committees offered competing claims to personal loyalty and territorial sovereignty across Habsburg territory on a nationalist basis, including Ostravsko. Worker-organized councils modelled after Russian-style Soviets offered an alternate model of political legitimacy based on the ineluctable logic of class struggle. However, the Czecho-Slovak Legion, disposing of the largest concentration of organized firepower in East-Central Europe, invaded and seized enormous swathes of territory from German-, Polish-, and Hungarian-nationalist competitors. During and following this process, the Entente supported Czecho-Slovakia to the hilt, certifying all of its territorial claims with the stamp of legitimacy.¹¹⁰⁴ The new state, built upon the principle of nationality but containing virulent nationalist antagonisms within itself, would face its own crises of nationalism, socialism, and internal disorder. The legacy of the First World War for Ostravsko was not one of peaceful production, but one of calamitous compulsion.

¹¹⁰⁴AMO/GM4/4d/2886/Morgenzeitung/Nov. 27, 1918/329/1/Die Entente bewilligt alle tschechischen Forderungen.

APPENDIX ONE: CITIES AND LOCATIONS

<u>German</u>	<u>Czech</u>	<u>Other</u>
Oderfurt	Přívov	
Ostrau	Ostrava	
Witkowitz	Vítkovice	
Freistadt	Fryštát	
Orlau	Orlová	
Karwin	Karviná	
Poremba	Poruba	
Michalkowitz	Michalkowice	
Zarubek	Zárubek	
Hrabuwka	Hrabůvka	
Hohenstadt	Zabřeh	
Schönbrunn	Svinov	
Klein Kuntschitz	Malý Kunčice	
Peterswald	Petrvald	
Lazy	Lazy	
Hulwaken	Hulváky	
Lemberg	Lvov	Львів
Trzynec	Třinec	
Hruschau	Hrušová	
Dombrau	Dombrová	
Oderberg	Bohumín	
Friedek	Frýdek	
Radwanitz	Radvanice	
Ober-Suchau	Horní Suchá	
Niedersuchau	Dolní Suchá	
Reichwaldau	Rychvald	
Paskau	Paskov	
Sillein	Žilina	Zsolna
Teschen	Těšín	Cieszyn
Neutitschein	Nový Jičín	
Lonkau	Louky	

APPENDIX TWO: MINING AND INDUSTRIAL OPERATIONS

Vítkovice Steelworks, Departments

Gusstahlfabrik	Steel casting plant
Baubüro	Construction office
Kesselfabrik	Boiler factory
Hochöfen Sofienhütte	Blast furnaces
Maschinenfabrik	Machine shop
Rohrwerk	Pipeworks
Direktion	Directorate
Konstruktionsbüro	Construction Office
Koksanstalt	Coking Installation
Benzolfabrik	Benzene Manufactory
Küpferrhütte	Copperworks
Elektrische Raffinerie	Electrical Refinery
Laboratorium	Laboratory
Walzhütte I	Rolling Works I
Hüttenschlosserei	Fitting Works
Walzhütte II	Rolling Works II
Neues Stahl- und Walzwerk	New Steel and Rolling Mill
Martinhütte	Martin-Process Steelworks
Puddlung	Puddleworks (Steel)
Brückenbauanstalt	Bridge Construction Office
Baubüro	Building Office
Eisengiesserei	Iron Foundry
Röhrenwalzwerk	Pipeworks
Schamottefabrik	Fireclay Manufactory
Ringofenziegelei	Brickworks
Gasanstalt	Gasworks
Werksbahn	Transportation Office
Elektrizitätswerk	Generating Plant
Materialmagazin, Warenhalle, Werkshotel	Storage
Quartieramt, Portiere, Wächter	Accommodations and Security
Werksspital, Versorgungsinstitut	Health and Provisioning
Eisenmagazin	Iron Stocks

Mining Organizations

Vítkovice Anthracite Mining:

Louisschacht
 Tiefbauschacht
 Karolinenzeche - Koksanstalt
 Theresianschacht - Koksanstalt
 Idaschacht
 Abteilung. Dombrau
 Abteilung. Petershofen

Emperor Ferdinand Northern Rail (*Nordbahn*)

Franzschacht - Koksanstalt
Hubertsschacht
Heinrichsschacht
Georgsschacht
Zarubek
Alexanderschacht
Michalkovitz
Josefschacht

Orlau-Lazy Mining Company

Hauptschacht
Neuschacht
Sofienschacht
Kaiser Franz-Josefsschacht
Suchau
Orlau-Lazy Koksanstalt

Ostrava-Karviná Mining Society (*Montangesellschaft*)

Schacht Nr. I
Montangesellschaft Koksanstalt

Austrian Mining and Steelworks Corporation

Albrechtsschacht
Fortschrittsschacht (Formerly Habsburgsschacht)
Barbaraschacht (Formerly Austriaschacht)
Gabrielenschacht
Hoheneggerschacht - Koksanstalt
Ignaszschacht - Koksanstalt
Oderschacht
Schacht VII - Koksanstalt
Ludwigschacht
Trzynietz Koksanstalt

Count Wilczek Mining

Dreifaltigkeitsschacht
Emmasschacht
Michaelisschacht
Johann-Maria Schacht
Gr. Wilczek Koksanstalt

Zwierzina'sche, Josefizsche (Independent; one mine)

Count Larisch-Mönnich Mining

Johannsschacht

Franziskaschacht
Tiefbauschacht
Heinrichschacht
Erzherzog Franzschacht
Suchauschacht
Gr. Larisch-Mönnich Koksanstalt

Silesia Mining Corporation (Independent, one mine)

APPENDIX THREE: SELECTED TERMS AND TRANSLATIONS

<u>German</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>Czech</u>
Kriegsgetreideverkehrsanstalt	War Provisions Transfer Agency	
Landsturm	Militia	
Huntstösser	Cart Hauler	
Abteilung	Department	
Feldgericht	Field court	
Wirtschaftsamt	Economics Office	
Statthalter	Statthalter	
Militärstrafgesetzbuch	Code of Military Justice	
Strafgesetzbuch	Civil Code	
Gemeinsame Ernährungsausschuss	Joint Food Committee	
	<i>Worker's Daily</i>	<i>Dělnický deník</i>
Arbeiterheim	Worker's Home	
Vertrauensmänner	Trustees/Stewards	Důvěrníky
Konzipist	Official	
Konsumverein	Consumption society	
Oberleutnant	Senior Lieutenant	
Strafgerichtsbarkeit	Penal Jurisdiction	
Abteilungskommando	District Command	
Ausschreitung	Disturbance	
	Czech Union	Český svaz
Landsturmarbeiterabteilung	Militia Labor Division	
Kohlenkaderkommando	Coal Cadre Command	
Landesgendarmeriekommando	State Gendarme Command	
Arbeitsministerium	Ministry of Labor	
Ministerium für Öffentlichen Arbeit	Ministry of Public Works	
Ministerium für Landesverteidigung	Ministry of Home Defense	
Österreichischen Berg- und Hüttengesellschaft	Austrian Mining and Steelworks Corporation	
	<i>Spirit of the Times</i>	<i>Duch času</i>
	<i>To Success</i>	<i>Na zdar</i>
<i>Morgenzeitung</i>	<i>Morning News</i>	
<i>Ostrauer Zeitung</i>	<i>Ostrava News</i>	
<i>Neue Freie Presse</i>	<i>New Free Press</i>	
	<i>Worker's Gazette</i>	<i>Dělnické listy</i>
	<i>Ostrava Daily</i>	<i>Ostravský deník</i>
	<i>Equality</i>	<i>Rovnost</i>
<i>Pester Lloyd</i>	<i>Pester Lloyd</i>	
<i>Reichspost</i>	<i>Imperial Post</i>	
<i>Prager Tagblatt</i>	<i>Prague Daily</i>	

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